





George Herbert Wailes.



GEORGE MEREDITH'S WORKS.

Each Novel complete in One Volume, price 3s. 6d.

DIANA OF THE CROSSWAYS.

EVAN HARRINGTON.

THE ORDEAL OF RICHARD FEVEREL.

THE ADVENTURES of HARRY RICHMOND.

SANDRA BELLONI.

VITTORIA.

RHODA FLEMING.

BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER.

THE EGOIST.

THE SHAVING OF SHAGPAT, and FARINA.

ONE OF OUR CONQUERORS.

BY
GEORGE MEREDITH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL, LIMITED.

1891.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. SHOWS ONE OF THE SHADOWS OF THE WORLD CROSSING A VIRGIN'S MIND	1
II. THE BURDEN UPON NESTA ...	16
III. SHOWS HOW THE SQUIRES IN A CONQUEROR'S SERVICE HAVE AT TIMES TO DO KNIGHTLY CONQUEST OF THEMSELVES	40
IV. SHOWS HOW TEMPER MAY KINDLE TEMPER AND AN INDIGNANT WOMAN GET HER WEAPON	66
V. A PAIR OF WOOLERS	83
VI. CONTAINS DEEDS UNRELATED AND EXPOSI- TIONS OF FEELINGS	107
VII. IN WHICH AGAIN WE MAKE USE OF THE OLD LAMPS FOR LIGHTING AN ABYSMAL DARK- NESS	128
VIII. NESTA AND HER FATHER	142
IX. THE MOTHER—THE DAUGHTER	169

CHAPTER	PAGE
X. NATALY, NESTA, AND DARTREY FENELLAN	189
XI. A CHAPTER IN THE SHADOWS OF MRS. MARSETT	213
XII. AN EXPIATION	243
XIII. THE NIGHT OF THE GREAT UNDELIVERED SPEECH	264
XIV. THE LAST	291

ONE OF OUR CONQUERORS.



CHAPTER I.

SHOWS ONE OF THE SHADOWS OF THE WORLD
CROSSING A VIRGIN'S MIND.

NESTA and her maid were brought back safely through the dusk by their constellation of a boy, to whom the provident ladies had entrusted her. They could not but note how short her syllables were. Her face was only partly seen. They had returned refreshed from their drive on the populous and orderly parade—so fair a pattern of their England!—after discoursing of “the dear child,” approving her manners, instancing proofs of her intelligence, nay, her possession of “character.” They did so, notwithstanding that these admissions were worse than their

growing love for the girl, to confound established ideas. And now, in thoughtfulness on her behalf, Dorothea said, "We have considered, Nesta, that you may be lonely; and if it is your wish, we will leave our card on your new acquaintance." Nesta took her hand and kissed it; she declined, saying, "No," without voice.

They had two surprises at the dinner-hour. One was the card of Dartrey Fenellan, naming an early time next day for his visit; and the other was the appearance of the Rev. Stuart Rem, a welcome guest. He had come to meet his Bishop.

He had come also with serious information for the ladies, regarding the Rev. Abram Posterley. No sooner was this out of his mouth than both ladies exclaimed: "Again!" So serious was it, that there had been a consultation at the Wells; Mr. Posterley's friend, the Rev. Septimus Barmby, and his own friend, the Rev. Groseman Buttermore, had journeyed from London to sit upon the case: and, "One hoped," Mr. Stuart Rem said, "poor Posterley would be restored to the

senses he periodically abandoned." He laid a hand on Tasso's curls, and withdrew it at a menace of teeth. Tasso would submit to rough caresses from Mr. Posterley; he would not allow Mr. Stuart Rem to touch him. Why was that? Perhaps for the reason of Mr. Posterley's being so emotional as perpetually to fall a victim to some bright glance and require the rescue of his friends; the slave of woman had a magnet for animals!

Dorothea and Virginia were drawn to compassionate sentiments, in spite of the provokeing recurrence of Mr. Posterley's malady. He had not an income to support a wife. Always was this unfortunate gentleman entangling himself in a passion for maid or widow of the Wells: and it was desperate, a fever. Mr. Stuart Rem charitably remarked on his taking it so severely because of his very scrupulous good conduct. They pardoned a little wound to their delicacy, and asked: "On this occasion?" Mr. Stuart Rem named a linendraper's establishment near the pantiles, where a fair young woman served. "And her reputation?" That was an article less

presentable through plate-glass, it seemed: Mr. Stuart Rem drew a prolonged breath into his nose.

“It is most melancholy!” they said in unison. “Nothing positive,” said he. “But the suspicion of a shadow, Mr. Stuart Rem! You will not permit it?” He stated, that his friend Buttermore might have influence. Dorothea said: “When I think of Mr. Posterley’s addiction to ceremonial observances, and to matrimony, I cannot but think of a sentence that fell from Mr. Durance one day, with reference to that division of our Church: he called it:—you frown! and I would only quote Mr. Durance to you in support of your purer form, as we hold it to be:—with the candles, the vestments, Confession, alas! he called it, ‘Rome and a wife.’”

Mr. Stuart Rem nodded an enforced assent: he testily dismissed mention of Mr. Durance, and resumed on Mr. Posterley.

The good ladies now, with some of their curiosity appeased, considerably signified to him, that a young maiden was present.

The young maiden had in heart stuff to render such small gossip a hum of summer midges. She did not imagine the dialogue concerned her in any way. She noticed Mr. Stuart Rem's attentive scrutiny of her from time to time. She had no sensitiveness, hardly a mind for things about her. To-morrow she was to see Captain Dartrey. She dwelt on that prospect, for an escape from the meshes of a painful hour—the most woeful of the hours she had yet known—passed with Judith Marsett: which dragged her soul through a weltering of the deeps, tossed her over and over, still did it with her ideas. It shocked her nevertheless to perceive how much of the world's flayed life and harsh anatomy she had apprehended, and so coldly, previous to Mrs. Marsett's lift of the veil in her story of herself: a skipping revelation, terrible enough to the girl; whose comparison of the previously suspected things with the things now revealed imposed the thought of her having been both a precocious and a callous young woman: a kind of "Delphica without the erudition," her mind

phrased it airily over her chagrin.—And the silence of Dudley proved him to have discovered his error in choosing such a person : he was wise, and she thanked him. She had an envy of the ignorant-innocents adored by the young man she cordially thanked for quitting her. She admired the white coat of armour they wore, whether bestowed on them by their constitution or by prudence. For while combating mankind now on Judith Marsett's behalf, personally she ran like a hare from the mere breath of an association with the very minor sort of similar charges ; ardently she desired the esteem of mankind ; she was at moments abject. But had she actually been aware of the facts now known ?

Those wits of the virgin young, quickened to shrewdness by their budding senses—and however vividly—require enlightenment of the audible and visible before their sterner feelings can be heated to break them away from a blushful dread and force the mind to know. As much as the wilfully or naturally blunted, the intelligently honest have to learn by touch : only, their understandings cannot

meanwhile be so wholly obtuse as our society's matron, acting to please the tastes of the civilized man—a creature that is not clean-washed of the Turk in him—barbarously exacts. The signor aforesaid is puzzled to read the woman, who is after all in his language; but when it comes to reading the maiden, she appears as a phosphorescent hieroglyph to some speculative Egyptologer; and he insists upon distinct lines and characters; no variations, if he is to have sense of surety. Many a young girl is misread by the amount she seems to know of our construction, history, and dealings, when it is not more than her sincere ripeness of nature, that has gathered the facts of life profuse about her, and prompts her through one or other of the instincts, often vanity, to show them to be not entirely strange to her; or haply her filly nature is having a fling at the social harness of hypocrisy. If you (it is usually through the length of ears of your Novelist that the privilege is yours) have overheard queer communications passing between girls,—and you must act the traitor

eavesdropper or Achilles masquerader to overhear so clearly,—these, be assured, are not specially the signs of their corruptness. Even the exceptionally cynical are chiefly to be accused of bad manners. Your Moralist is a myopic preacher, when he stamps infamy on them, or on our later generation, for the kick they have at grandmother decorum, because you do not or cannot conceal from them the grinning skeleton behind it.

Nesta once had dreams of her being loved : and she was to love in return for a love that excused her for loving double, treble ; as not her lover could love, she thought with grateful pride in the treasure she was to pour out at his feet ; as only one or two (and they were women) in the world had ever loved. Her notion of the passion was parasitic : man the tree, woman the bine : but the bine was flame to enwind and to soar, serpent to defend, immortal flowers to crown. The choice her parents had made for her in Dudley, behind the mystery she had scent of, nipped her dream, and prepared her to meet, as it were, the fireside of a November day

instead of springing up and into the dawn's blue of full summer with swallows on wing. Her station in exile at the Wells of the weariful rich, under the weight of the sullen secret, unenlivened by Dudley's courtship, subdued her to the world's decrees; phrased thus: "I am not to be a heroine." The one golden edge to the view was, that she would greatly please her father. Her dream of a love was put away like a botanist's pressed weed. But after hearing Judith Marsett's wild sobs, it had no place in her cherishing. For, above all, the unhappy woman protested love to have been the cause of her misery. She moaned of "her Ned;" of his goodness, his deceitfulness, her trustfulness; his pride and the vileness of his friends; her long-suffering and her break down of patience. It was done for the proof of her unworthiness of Nesta's friendship: that she might be renounced, and embraced. She told the pathetic half of her story, to suit the gentle ear, whose critical keenness was lost in compassion. How deep the compassion, mixed with the girl's native respect for the evil-fortuned, may be

judged by her inaccessibility to a vulgar tang that she was aware of in the deluge of the torrent, where Innocence and Ned and Love and a proud Family and that beast Worrell rolled together in leaping and shifting involutions.

A darkness of thunder was on the girl. Although she was not one to shrink beneath it like the small bird of the woods, she had to say within herself many times, "I shall see Captain Dartrey to-morrow," for a recovery and a nerving. And with her thought of him, her tooth was at her underlip, she struggled abashed, in hesitation over men's views of her sex, and how to bring a frank mind to meet him; to be sure of his not at heart despising; until his character swam defined and bright across her scope. "He is good to women." Fragments of conversation, principally her father's, had pictured Captain Dartrey to her most manfully tolerant toward a frivolous wife.

He came early in the morning, instantly after breakfast.

Not two minutes had passed before she

was at home with him. His words, his looks, revived her spirit of romance, gave her the very landscapes, and new ones. Yes, he was her hero. But his manner made him also an adored big brother, stamped splendid by the perils of life. He sat square, as if alert to rise, with an elbow on a knee, and the readiest turn of head to speakers, the promptest of answers, eyes that were a brighter accent to the mouth, so vividly did look accompany tone. He rallied her, chatted and laughed; pleased the ladies by laughing at Colney Durance, and inspired her with happiness when he spoke of England:—"One has to be in exile awhile, to see the place she takes."

"Oh, Captain Dartrey, I do like to hear you say so," she cried; his voice was reassuring also in other directions: it rang of true man.

He volunteered, however, a sad admission, that England had certainly lost something of the great nation's proper conception of Force: the meaning of it, virtue of it, and need for it. "She bleats for a lesson, and will get her lesson."

But if we have Captain Dartrey, we shall come through ! So said the sparkle of Nesta's eyes.

"She is very like her father," he said to the ladies.

"We think so," they remarked.

"There's the mother too," said he ; and Nesta saw, that the ladies shadowed.

They retired. Then she begged him to "tell her of her own dear mother." The news gave comfort, except for the suspicion, that the dear mother was being worn by her entertaining so largely. "Papa is to blame," said Nesta.

"A momentary strain. Your father has an idea of Parliament; one of the London boroughs."

"And I, Captain Dartrey, when do I go back to them ?"

"Your mother comes down to consult with you. And now, do we ride together ?"

"You are free ?"

"My uncle, Lord Clan, lets me out."

"To-day ?"

"Why, yes !"

“This morning?”

“In an hour’s time.”

“I will be ready.”

Nesta sent a line of excuse to Mrs. Marsett, throwing in a fervent adjective for balm.

That fair person rode out with the troop under conduct of the hallowing squire of the stables, and passed by Nesta on horseback beside Dartrey Fenellan at the steps of a huge hotel; issuing from which, pretty Mrs. Blathenoy was about to mount. Mrs. Marsett looked ahead and coloured, but she could not restrain one look at Nesta, that embraced her cavalier. Nesta waved hand to her, and nodded. Mrs. Marsett withdrew her eyes; her doing so, silent though it was, resembled the drag back to sea of the shingle-wave below her, such a screaming of tattle she heard in the questions discernible through the attitude of the cavalier and of the lady, who paused to stare, before the leap up in the saddle. ‘Who is she?—what is she?—how did you know her?—where does she come from?—wears her hat on her brows!—huge gauntlets out of style!—shady! shady!’

shady!’ And as always during her nervous tumults, the name of Worrell made diapason of that execrable uproar. Her hat on her brows had an air of dash, defying a world it could win, as Ned well knew. But she scanned her gauntlets disapprovingly. This town, we are glad to think, has a bright repute for glove-shops. And Mrs. Marsett could applaud herself for sparing Ned’s money; she had mended her gloves, if they were in the fashion.—But how does the money come? Hark at that lady and that gentleman questioning Miss Radnor of everything, everything in the world about her! Not a word do they get from Miss Radnor. And it makes them the more inquisitive. Idle rich people, comfortably fenced round, are so inquisitive! And Mrs. Marsett, loving Nesta for the notice of her, maddened by the sting of tongues it was causing, heard the wash of the beach, without consciousness of analogies, but with a body ready to jump out of skin, out of life, in desperation at the sound.

She was all impulse; a shifty piece of un-

mercenary stratagem occasionally directing it. Arrived at her lodgings, she wrote to Nesta : "I entreat you not to notice me, if you pass me on the road again. Let me drop, never mind how low I go. I was born to be wretched. A line from you, just a line now and then, only to show me I am not forgotten. I have had a beautiful dream. I am not bad in reality ; I love goodness, I know. I cling to the thought of you, as my rescue, I declare. Please, let me hear : if it's not more than 'good day' and your initials on a post-card."

The letter brought Nesta in person to her.

CHAPTER II.

THE BURDEN UPON NESTA.

COULD there be confidences on the subject of Mrs. Marsett with Captain Dartrey?—Nesta timidly questioned her heart: she knocked at an iron door shut upon a thing alive. The very asking froze her, almost to stopping her throbs of pity for the woman. With Captain Dartrey, if with any one; but with no one. Not with her mother even. Toward her mother, she felt guilty of knowing. Her mother had a horror of that curtain. Nesta had seen it, and had taken her impressions: she, too, shrank from it; the more when impelled to draw near it. Louise de Seilles would have been another self; Louise was away; when to return, the dear friend could not state. Speaking in her ear, would have been possible; the theme precluded writing.

It was ponderous combustible new knowledge of life for a girl to hold unaided. In the presence of the simple silvery ladies Dorothea and Virginia, she had qualms, as if she were breaking out in spots before them. The ladies fancied, that Mr. Stuart Rem had hinted to them oddly of the girl; and that he might have meant, she appeared a little too cognizant of poor Mr. Abram Posterley's malady—as girls, in these terrible days, only too frequently, too brazenly, are. They discoursed to her of the degeneracy of the manners, nay, the morals of young Englishwomen, once patterns! They sketched the young English gentlewoman of their time; indeed a beauty; with round red cheeks, and rounded open eyes, and a demure shut mouth, a puppet's divine ignorance; inoffensive in the highest degree, rightly worshipped. They were earnest, and Nesta struck at herself. She wished to be as they had been, reserving her painful independence.

They were good: they were the ideal women of our country; which demands if it be but the semblance of the sureness of stationary

excellence; such as we have in Sèvres and Dresden, polished bright and smooth as ever by the morning's flick of a duster; perhaps in danger of accidents—accidents must be kept away; but enviable, admirable, we think, when we are not thinking of seed sown or help given to the generations to follow. Nesta both envied and admired; she revered them; yet her sharp intelligence, larger in the extended boundary of thought coming of strange crimson-lighted new knowledge, discerned in a dimness what blest conditions had fixed them on their beautiful barren eminence. Without challengeing it, she had a rebellious rush of sympathy for our evil-fortuned of the world; the creatures in the battle, the wounded, trodden, mud-stained: and it alarmed her lest she should be at heart one out of the fold.

She had the sympathy, nevertheless, and renewing and increasing with the pulsations of a compassion that she took for her reflective survey. The next time she saw Dartrey Fenellan, she was assured of him, as being the man who might be spoken to; and by a

woman : though not by a girl ; not spoken to by her. The throb of the impulse precipitating speech subsided to a dumb yearning. He noticed her look : he was unaware of the human sun in the girl's eyes taking an image of him for permanent habitation in her breast. That face of his, so clearly lined, quick, firm, with the blue smile on it like the gleam of a sword coming out of sheath, did not mean hardness, she could have vowed. O that some woman, other than the unhappy woman herself, would speak the words denied to a girl ! He was the man who would hearken and help. Essential immediate help was to be given besides the noble benevolence of mind. Novel ideas of manliness and the world's need for it were printed on her understanding. For what could women do in aid of a good cause ! She fawned : she deemed herself very despicably her hero's inferior. The thought of him enclosed her. In a prison, the gaoler is a demi-God—hued bright or black, as it may be ; and, by the present arrangement between the sexes, she, whom the world allowed not to have an intimation

.

from eye or ear, or from nature's blood-ripeness in commune with them, of certain matters, which it suffers to be notorious, necessarily directed her appeal almost in worship to the man, who was the one man endowed to relieve, and who locked her mouth for shame.

Thus was she, too, being put into her woman's harness of the bit and the blinkers, and taught to know herself for the weak thing, the gentle parasite, which the fiction of our civilization expects her, caressingly and contemptuously, to become in the active, while it is exacted of her—O Comedy of Clowns!—that in the passive she be a rock-fortress impregnable, not to speak of magically encircled. She must also have her feelings; she must not be an unnatural creature. And she must have a sufficient intelligence; for her stupidity does not flatter the possessing man. It is not an organic growth that he desires in his mate, but a happy composition. You see the world which comes of the pair.

This burning Nesta, Victor's daughter, tempered by Nataly's milder blood, was a girl

in whom the hard shocks of the knowledge of life, perforce of the hardness upon pure metal, left a strengthening for generous imagination. She did not sit to brood on her injured senses or set them through speculation touching heat; they were taken up and consumed by the fire of her mind. Nor had she leisure for the abhorrences, in a heart all flowing to give aid, and uplift and restore. Self was as urgent in her as in most of the young; but the gift of humour, which had previously diverted it, was now the quick feeling for her sisterhood, through the one piteous example she knew; and broadening it, through her insurgent abasement on their behalf, which was her scourged pride of sex. She but faintly thought of blaming the men whom her soul besought for justice, for common kindness, to women. There was the danger, that her aroused young ignorance would charge the whole of the misery about and abroad upon the stronger of those two: and another danger, that the vision of the facts below the surface would discolour and disorder her views of existence. But she loved, she

sprang to, the lighted world; and she had figures of male friends, to which to cling; and they helped in animating glorious historical figures on the world's library-shelves or under yet palpitating earth. Promise of a steady balance of her nature, too, was shown in the absence of any irritable urgency to be doing, when her bosom bled to help. Beyond the resolve, that she would not abandon the woman who had made confession to her, she formed no conscious resolutions. Far ahead down her journey of the years to come, she did see muffled things she might hope and would strive to do. They were chrysalis shapes. Above all, she flew her blind quickened heart on the wings of an imaginative force; and those of the young who can do that, are in their blood incorruptible by dark knowledge, irradiated under darkness in the mind. Let but the throb be kept for others. That is the one secret, for redemption, if not for preservation.

Victor descended on his marine London to embrace his girl, full of regrets at Fredi's absence from the great whirl 'overhead,' as

places of multitudinous assembly, where he shone, always appeared to him. But it was not to last long; she would soon be on the surface again! At the first clasp of her, he chirped some bars of her song. He challenged her to duet before the good ladies, and she kindled, she was caught up by his gaiety, wondering at herself; faintly aware of her not being spontaneous. And she made her father laugh, just in the old way; and looked at herself in his laughter, with the thought, that she could not have become so changed; by which the girl was helped to jump to her humour. Victor turned his full front to Dorothea and Virginia, one sunny beam of delight: and although it was Mr. Stuart Rem who was naughty Nesta's victim, and although it seemed a trespass on her part to speak in such a manner of a clerical gentleman, they were seized; they were the opposite partners of a laughing quadrille, lasting till they were tired out.

Victor had asked his girl, if she sang on a Sunday. The ladies remembered, that she had put the question for permission to Mr.

Stuart Rem, who was opposed to secular singing.

“And what did he say?” said Victor.

Nesta shook head: “It was not what he said, papa; it was his look. His duty compelled him, though he loves music. He had the look of a Patriarch putting his handmaiden away into the desert.”

Dorothea and Virginia, in spite of protests within, laughed to streams. They recollected the look; she had given the portrait of Mr. Stuart Rem in the act of repudiating secular song.

Victor conjured up a day when this darling Fredi, a child, stood before a famous picture in the Brera, at Milan: when he and her mother noticed the child’s very studious graveness; and they had talked of it; he remarking, that she disapproved of the Patriarch; and Nataly, that she was taken with Hagar’s face.

He seemed surprised at her not having heard from Dudley.

“How is that?” said he.

“Most probably because he has not written, papa.”

He paused after the cool reply. She had no mournful gaze at all; but in the depths of the clear eyes he knew so well, there was a coil of something animate, whatever it might be. And twice she drew a heavy breath.

He mentioned it in London. Nataly telegraphed at night for her girl to meet her next day at Dartrey's hotel.

Their meeting was incomprehensibly joyless to the hearts of each, though it was desired, and had long been desired, and mother was mother, daughter daughter, without diminution of love between them. They held hands, they kissed and clasped, they showered their tender phrases with full warm truth, and looked into eyes and surely saw one another. But the heart of each was in a battle of its own, taking wounds or crying for supports. Whether to speak to her girl at once, despite the now vehement contrary counsel of Victor, was Nataly's deliberation, under the thought of the young creature's perplexity in not seeing her at the house of the Duvidney ladies: while Nesta conjured in a flash the past impressions of her mother's

shrinking distaste from any such hectic themes as this which burdened and absorbed her; and she was almost joining to it, through sympathy with any thought or feeling of one in whom she had such pride; she had the shudder of revulsion. Further, Nataly put on rather cravenly an air of distress, or she half designingly permitted her trouble to be seen, by way of affecting her girl's recollection when the confession was to come, that Nesta might then understand her to have been restrained from speaking, not evasive of her duty. The look was interpreted by Nesta as belonging to the social annoyances dating, in her calendar, from Creckholt, apprehensively dreaded at Lakelands. She hinted asking, and her mother nodded; not untruthfully; but she put on a briskness after the nod; and a doubt was driven into Nesta's bosom.

Her dear Skepsey was coming down to her for a holiday, she was glad to hear. Of Dudley, there was no word. Nataly shunned his name, with a superstitious dread lest any mention of him should renew pretensions that

she hoped, and now supposed, were quite withdrawn. So she had told poor Mr. Barmby only yesterday, at his humble request to know. He had seen Dudley on the pantiles, walking with a young lady, he said. And "he feared," he said; using a pardonable commonplace of deceit. Her compassion accounted for the "fear" which was the wish, and caused her not to think it particularly strange, that he should imagine Dudley to have quitted the field. Now that a disengaged Dartrey Fenellan was at hand, poor Mr. Barmby could have no chance.

Dartrey came to her room by appointment. She wanted to see him alone, and he informed her, that Mrs. Blathenoy was in the hotel, and would certainly receive and amuse Nesta for any length of time.

"I will take her up," said Nataly, and rose, and she sat immediately, and fluttered a hand at her breast. She laughed: "Perhaps I'm tired!"

Dartrey took Nesta.

He returned, saying: "There's a lift in the hotel. Do the stairs affect you at all?"

She fenced his sharp look. "Laziness, I fancy; age is coming on. How is it Mrs. Blathenoy is here?"

"Well! how?"

"Foolish curiosity?"

"I think I have made her of service. I did not bring the lady here."

"Of service to whom?"

"Why, to Victor!"

"Has Victor commissioned you?"

"You can bear to hear it. Her husband knows the story. He has a grudge . . . commercial reasons. I fancy it is, that Victor stood against his paper at the table of the Bank. Blathenoy vowed blow for blow. But I think the little woman holds him in. She says she does."

"Victor prompted you?"

"It occurred as it occurred."

"She does it for love of us?—Oh! I can't trifle. Dartrey!"

"Tell me."

"First, you haven't let me know what you think of my Nesta."

"She's a dear good girl."

“Not so interesting to you as a flighty little woman!”

“She has a speck of some sort on her mind.”

Nataly spied at Dudley's behaviour, and said: “That will wear away. Is Mr. Blathenoy much here?”

“As often as he can come, I believe.”

“That is? . . .”

“I have seen him twice.”

“His wife remains?”

“Fixed here for the season.”

“My friend!”

“No harm, no harm!”

“But—to her!”

“You have my word of honour.”

“Yes: and she is doing you a service, at your request; and you occasionally reward her with thanks; and she sees you are a man of honour. Do you not know women?”

Dartrey blew his pooh-pooh on feminine suspicions. “There's very little left of the Don Amoroso in me. Women don't worship stone figures.”

“They do:—like the sea-birds. And what

do you say to me, Dartrey?—I can confess it: I am one of them: I love you. When last you left England, I kissed your hand. It was because of your manly heart in that stone figure. I kept from crying: you used to scorn us English for the ‘whimpering fits’ you said we enjoy and must have—in books, if we can’t get them up for ourselves. I could have prayed to have you as brother or son. I love my Victor the better for his love of you. Oh!—poor soul!—how he is perverted since that building of Lakelands! He cannot take soundings of the things he does. Formerly he confided in me, in all things: now not one;—I am the chief person to deceive. If only he had waited! We are in a network of intrigues and schemes, every artifice, in London—tempting one to hate simple worthy people, who naturally have their views, and see me an impostor, and tolerate me, fascinated by him:—or bribed—it has to be said. There are ways of bribing. I trust he may not have in the end to pay too heavily for succeeding. He seems a man pushed by Destiny; not irresponsible,

but less responsible than most. He is desperately tempted by his never failing. Whatever he does! . . . it is true! And it sets me thinking of those who have never had an ailment, up to a certain age, when the killing blow comes. Latterly I have seen into him: I never did before. Had I been stronger, I might have saved, or averted. . . . But, you will say, the stronger woman would not have occupied my place. I must have been blind too. I did not see, that his nature shrinks from the thing it calls up. He dreads the exposure he courts—or has to combat with all his powers. It has been a revelation to me of him—life as well. Nothing stops him. Now it is Parliament—a vacant London Borough. He counts on a death: Ah! terrible! I have it like a snake's bite night and day."

Nataly concluded: "There: it has done me some good to speak. I feel so base." She breathed heavily.

Dartrey took her hand and bent his lips to it. "Happy the woman who has not more to speak! How long will Nesta stay here?"

“ You will watch over her, Dartrey ? She stays—her father wishes—up to . . . ah ! We can hardly be in such extreme peril. He has her doctor, her lawyer, and her butler—a favourite servant—to check, and influence, her. She—you know who it is !—does not, I am now convinced, mean persecution. She was never a mean-minded woman. Oh ! I could wish she were. They say she is going. Then I am to be made an ‘ honest woman of.’ Victor wants Nesta, now that she is away, to stay until . . . You understand. He feels she is safe from any possible kind of harm with those good ladies. And I feel she is the safer for having you near. Otherwise, how I should pray to have you with us ! Daily I have to pass through, well, something like the ordeal of the red-hot ploughshares—and without the innocence, dear friend ! But it’s best that my girl should not have to be doing the same ; though she would have the innocence. But she writhes under any shadow of a blot. And for her to learn the things that are in the world, through her mother’s history !—and led to know it by the

falling away of friends, or say, acquaintances ! However ignorant at present, she learns from a mere nothing. I dread ! . . . In a moment, she is a blaze of light. There have been occurrences. Only Victor could have overcome them ! I had to think it better for my girl, that she was absent. We are in such a whirl up there ! So I work round again to 'how long ?' and the picture of myself counting the breaths of a dying woman. The other day I was told I was envied ! ”

“Battle, battle, battle ;—for all of us, in every position ! ” said Dartrey, sharply, to clip a softness : “ except when one’s attending on an invalid uncle. Then it’s peace ; rather like extinction. And I can’t be crying for the end either. I bite my moustache and tap foot on the floor, out of his hearing ; make believe I’m patient. Now I’ll fetch Nesta.”

Mrs. Blathenoy came down with an arm on Nesta’s shoulder. She held a telegram, and said to Nataly : “ What can this mean ? It’s from my husband ; he puts ‘ Jacob : ’ my husband’s Christian name :—so like my husband, where there’s no concealment ! There

—he says: ‘Down to-night else pack ready start to-morrow.’ Can it signify, affairs are bad with my husband in the city?”

It had that signification to Nataly’s understanding. At the same time, the pretty little woman’s absurd lisping repetition of ‘my husband’ did not seem without design to inflict the wound it caused.

In reality, it was not malicious; it came of the bewitchment of a silly tongue by her knowledge of the secret to be controlled: and after contrasting her fortunes with Nataly’s, on her way down-stairs, she had comforted herself by saying, that at least *she* had a husband. She was not aware that she dealt a hurt until she had found a small consolation in the indulgence: for Captain Dartrey Fenellan admired this commanding figure of a woman, who could not legally say that which the woman he admired less, if at all, legally could say.

“I must leave you to interpret,” Nataly remarked.

Mrs. Blathenoy resented her unbefitting queenly style. For this reason, she abstained

from an intended leading up to mention of the 'singular-looking lady' seen riding with Miss Radnor more than once; and as to whom, Miss Radnor (for one gives her the name) had not just now, when questioned, spoken very clearly. So the mother's alarms were not raised.

And really it was a pity, Mrs. Blathenoy said to Dartrey subsequently; finding him colder than before Mrs. Radnor's visit; it was a pity, because a young woman in Miss Radnor's position should not by any possibility be seen in association with a person of commonly doubtful appearance.

She was denied the petulant satisfaction of rousing the championship bitter to her. Dartrey would not deliver an opinion on Miss Radnor's conduct. He declined, moreover, to assist in elucidating the telegram by "looking here," and poring over the lines beside a bloomy cheek. He was petulantly whipped on the arm with her glove, and pouted at. And it was then—and then only or chiefly through Nataly's recent allusion—that the man of honour had his quakings in

view of the quagmire, where he was planted on an exceedingly narrow causeway, not of the firmest. For she was a pretty little woman, one of the prize gifts of the present education of women to the men who are for having them quiescent domestic patterns; and her artificial ingenuousness or candid frivolities came to her by nature to kindle the nature of the gentleman on the other bank of the stream, and witch him to the plunge, so greatly mutually regretted after taken: an old duet to the moon.

Dartrey escaped to the Club, where he had a friend. The friend was Colonel Sudley, one of the modern studious officers, not in good esteem with the authorities. He had not forgiven Dartrey for the intemperateness which cut off a brilliant soldier from the service. He was reduced to acknowledge, however, that there was a sparkling defense for him to reply with, in the shape of a fortune gained: and where we have a Society forcing us to live up to an expensive level, very trying to a soldier's income, a fortune gained will offer excuses for misconduct short

of disloyal or illegal. They talked of the state of the Army: we are moving. True, and at the last Review, the 'march past' was performed before a mounted generalissimo profoundly asleep, head on breast. Our English military 'moving' may now be likened to Somnolency on Horseback. "Oh, come, no rancour," said the colonel; "you know he's a kind old boy at heart; nowhere a more affectionate man alive!"

"So the sycophants are sure of posts!"

"Come, I say! He's devoted to the Service."

"Invalid him, and he shall have a good epitaph."

"He's not so responsible as the taxpayer."

"There you touch home. Mother Goose can't imagine the need for defense until a hand's at her feathers."

"What about her shrieks now and then?"

"Indigestion of a surfeit?"

They were in a laughing wrangle when two acquaintances of the colonel's came near. One of them recognized Dartrey. He changed a prickly subject to one that is

generally as acceptable to the servants of Mars. His companion said: "Who is the girl out with Judith Marsett?" He flavoured eulogies of the girl's good looks in easy garrison English. She was praised for sitting her horse well. One had met her on the parade, in the afternoon, walking with Mrs. Marsett. Colonel Sudley had seen them on horseback. He remarked to Dartrey: "And by the way, you're a clean stretch ahead of us. I've seen you go by these windows, with the young lady on one side, and a rather pretty woman on the other too."

"Nothing is unseen in this town!" Dartrey rejoined.

Strolling to his quarters along the breezy parade at night, he proposed to himself, that he would breathe an immediate caution to Nesta. How had she come to know this Mrs. Marsett? But he was more seriously thinking of what Colney Durance called 'The Mustard Plaster;' the satirist's phrase for warm relations with a married fair one: and Dartrey, clear of any design to have it at his breast, was beginning to take intimations of

pricks and burns. They are an almost positive cure of inflammatory internal conditions. They were really hard on him, who had none to be cured.

The hour was nigh midnight. As he entered his hotel, the porter ran off to the desk in his box, and brought him a note, saying, that a lady had left it at half-past nine.—Left it?—Then the lady could not be the alarming lady. He was relieved. The words of the letter were cabalistic; these, beneath underlined address:—

“I beg you to call on me, if I do not see you this evening. It is urgent; you will excuse me when I explain. Not late to-morrow. I am sure you will not fail to come. I could write what would be certain to bring you. I dare not trust any names to paper.”

The signature was, Judith Marsett.

CHAPTER III.

SHOWS HOW THE SQUIRES IN A CONQUEROR'S
SERVICE HAVE AT TIMES TO DO KNIGHTLY
CONQUEST OF THEMSELVES.

By the very earliest of the trains shot away to light and briny air from London's November gloom, which knows the morning through increase of gasjets, little Skepsey was hurried over suburban chimneys, in his friendly third-class carriage; where we have reminders of ancient pastoral times peculiar to our country, as it may chance; but where a man may speak to his neighbour right off without being deemed offensive. That is homely. A social fellow knitting closely to his fellows when he meets them, enjoys it, even at the cost of uncushioned seats: he can, if imps are in him, merryandrew as much as he

pleases ; detested punctilio does not reign there ; he can proselytize for the soul's welfare ; decry or uphold the national drink ; advertize a commercial Firm deriving prosperity from the favour of the multitude ; exhort to patriotism. All is accepted. Politeness is the rule, according to Skepsey's experience of the Southern part of the third-class kingdom. And it is as well to mark the divisions, for the better knowledge of our countrymen. The North requires volumes to itself.

The hard-grained old pirate-stock Northward has built the land, and is to the front when we are at our epic work. Meanwhile it gets us a blowzy character, by shouldering roughly among the children of civilization. Skepsey, journeying one late afternoon up a Kentish line, had, in both senses of the word, encountered a long-limbed navvy ; an intoxicated, he was compelled by his manly modesty to desire to think ; whose loathly talk, forced upon the hearing of a decent old woman opposite him, passed baboonish behaviour ; so much so, that Skepsey civilly intervened ;

subsequently inviting him to leave the carriage and receive a lesson at the station they were nearing. Upon his promising faithfully, that it should be a true and telling lesson, the navvy requested this pygmy spark to flick his cheek, merely to show he meant war in due sincerity; and he as faithfully, all honour, promising not to let it bring about a breakage of the laws of the Company, Skepsey promptly did the deed. So they went forth.

Skepsey alluded to the incident, for an example of the lamentable deficiency in science betrayed by most of our strong men when put to it; and the bitter thought, that he could count well nigh to a certainty on the total absence of science in the long-armed navvy, whose fist on his nose might have been as the magnet of a pin, was chief among his reminiscences after the bout, destroying pleasure for the lover of Old England's might. One blow would have sent Skepsey travelling. He was not seriously struck once. They parted, shaking hands; the navvy confessing himself to have "drunk a drop;" and that perhaps accounted for his having been "topped

by a dot on him." He declined to make oath never to repeat his offence ; but said, sending his vanquisher to the deuce, with an amicable push at his shoulder, " Damned if I ever forget five foot five stretched six foot flat ! " Skepsey counted his feet some small amount higher ; but our hearty rovers' sons have their ballad moods when giving or taking a thrashing. One of the third-class passengers, a lad of twenty, became Skepsey's pupil, and turned out clever with the gloves and was persuaded to enter the militia, and grew soon to be a corporal. Thus there was profit of the affair, though the navy sank out of sight. Let us hope and pray he will not insult the hearing of females again. If only females knew how necessary it is, for their sakes, to be able to give a lesson now and then ! Ladies are positively opposed. And Judges too, who dress so like them. The manhood of our country is kept down, in consequence. Mr. Durance was right, when he said something about the state of war being wanted to weld our races together : and yet we are always praying for the state

of peace, which causes cracks and gaps among us! Was that what he meant by illogical? It seemed to Skepsey—oddly, considering his inferior estimate of the value of the fair sex—that a young woman with whom he had recently made acquaintance; and who was in Brighton now, upon missionary work; a member of the ‘Army,’ an officer of advancing rank, Matilda Pridden, by name; was nearer to the secret of the right course of conduct for individual citizens and the entire country than any gentleman he knew.

Yes, nearer to it than his master was! Thinking of Mr. Victor Radnor, Skepsey fetched a sigh. He had knocked at his master’s door at the office one day, and imagining the call to enter, had done so, and had seen a thing he could not expunge. Lady Grace Halley was there. From matters he gathered, Skepsey guessed her to be working for his master among the great folks, as he did with Jarniman, and Mr. Fenellan with Mr. Carling. But is it usual, he asked himself—his natural veneration framing the rebuke to his master thus—to repay the ser-

vices of a lady so warmly?—We have all of us an ermined owl within us to sit in judgment of our superiors as well as our equals; and the little man, notwithstanding a servant's bounden submissiveness, was forced to hear the judicial pronouncement upon his master's behaviour. His master had, at the same time, been saying most weighty kind words more and more of late: one thing:—that, if he gave all he had to his fellows, and did all he could, he should still be in their debt. And he was a very wealthy gentleman. What are we to think? The ways of our superiors are wonderful. We do them homage: still we feel, we painfully feel, we are beginning to worship elsewhere. It is the pain of a detachment of the very roots of our sea-weed heart from a rock. Mr. Victor Radnor was an honour to his country. Skepsey did not place the name of Matilda Pridden beside it or in any way compare two such entirely different persons. At the same time and most earnestly, while dreading to hear, he desired to have Matilda Pridden's opinion of the case distressing him. He

never could hear it, because he could never be allowed to expound the case to her. Skepsey sighed again : he as much as uttered : Oh, if we had a few thousands like her!— But what if we do have them? They won't marry! There they are, all that the country requires in wives and mothers ; and like Miss Priscilla Graves, they won't marry!

He looked through sad thoughts across the benches of the compartments to the farther end of the carriage, where sat the Rev. Septimus Barmby, looking at him through a meditation as obscure if not so mournful. Few are the third-class passengers outward at that early hour in the winter season, and Skepsey's gymnastics to get beside the Rev. Septimus were unimpeded ; though a tight-packed carriage of us poor journaliers would not have obstructed them with as much as a sneer. Mr. Barmby and Skepsey greeted. The latter said, he had a holiday, to pay a visit to Miss Nesta. The former said, he hoped he should see Miss Nesta. Skepsey then rapidly brought the conversation to a point where Matilda Pridden was comprised.

He discoursed of the 'Army' and her position in the Army, giving instances of her bravery, the devotion shown by her to the cause of morality, in all its forms. Mr. Barmby had his fortunes in his hands at the moment, he could not lend an attentive ear; and he disliked this Army, the title it had taken, and the mixing of women and men in its ranks; not to speak of a presumption in its proceedings, and the public marching and singing. Moreover, he enjoyed his one or two permissible glasses: he doubted that the Chiefs of the Army had common benevolence for the inoffensive pipe. But the cause of morality was precious to him; morality and a fit of softness, and the union of the happiest contrast of voices, had set him for a short while, before the dawn of Nesta's day, hankering after Priscilla Graves. Skepsey's narrative of Matilda Pridden's work down at the East of London, was effective; it had the ring to thrill a responsive chord in Mr. Barmby, who mused on London's East, and martyrly service there. His present expectations were of a very different

sort; but a beautiful bride, bringing us wealth, is no misleading beam, if we direct the riches rightly. Septimus, a solitary minister in those grisly haunts of the misery breeding vice, must needs accomplish less than a Septimus the husband of one of England's chief heiresses:—only not the most brilliant, owing to circumstances known to the Rev. Groseman Buttermore: strangely, and opportunely, revealed: for her exceeding benefit, it may be hoped. She is no longer the ignorant girl, to reject the protecting hand of one whose cloth is the best of cloak-ing. A glance at Dudley Sowerby's defection, assures our worldly wisdom too, that now is the time to sue.

Several times while Mr. Barmby made thus his pudding of the desires of the flesh and the spirit, Skepsey's tales of Matilda Pridden's heroism caught his attention. He liked her deeds; he disliked the position in which the young woman placed herself to perform them; and he said so. Women are to be *women*, he said.

Skepsey agreed: "If we could get men to do the work, sir!"

Mr. Barmby was launching forth : Plenty of men !—His mouth was blocked by the reflection, that we count the men on our fingers ; often are we, as it were, an episcopal thumb surveying scarce that number of followers ! He diverged to censure of the marchings and the street-singing : the impediment to traffic, the annoyance to a finely musical ear. He disapproved altogether of Matilda Pridden's military display, pronouncing her to be, "Doubtless a worthy young person."

"Her age is twenty-seven," said Skepsey, spying at the number of his own.

"You have known her long ?" Mr. Barmby asked.

"Not long, sir. She has gone through trouble. She believes very strongly in the will :—If I *will* this, if I *will* that, and it is the right will, not wickedness, it is done—as good as done ; and force is quite superfluous. In her sermons, she exhorts to prayer before action."

"Preaches ?"

"She moves a large assembly, sir."

“It would seem, that England is becoming Americanized!” exclaimed the Conservative in Mr. Barmby. Almost he groaned; and his gaze was fish-like in vacancy, on hearing the little man speak of the present intrepid forwardness of the sex to be publicly doing. It is for men the most indigestible fact of our century: one that by contrast throws an overearthly holiness on our decorous dutiful mothers, who contentedly worked below the surface while men unremittingly attended to their interests above.

Skepsey drew forth a paper-covered shilling-book: a translation from the French, under a yelling title of savage hate of Old England and cannibal glee at her doom. Mr. Barmby dropped his eyelashes on it, without comment; nor did he reply to Skepsey’s forlorn remark: “We let them think they could do it!”

Behold the downs. Breakfast is behind them. Miss Radnor likewise: if the poor child has a name. We propose to supply the deficiency. She does not declare war upon tobacco. She has a cultured and a beautiful

voice. We abstain from enlargeing on the charms of her person. She has resources, which representatives of a rival creed would plot to secure.

“Skepsey, you have your quarters at the house of Miss Radnor’s relatives?” said Mr. Barmby, as they emerged from tunnelled chalk. “Mention, that I think of calling in the course of the day.”

A biscuit had been their breakfast without a name. They parted at the station, roused by the smell of salt to bestow a more legitimate title on the day’s restorative beginning. Down the hill, along by the shops, and Skepsey, in sight of Miss Nesta’s terrace, considered it still an early hour for a visitor; so, to have the sea about him, he paid pier-money, and hurried against the briny wings of a South-wester; green waves, curls of foam, flecks of silver, under low-flying grey-dark cloud-curtains shaken to a rift, where at one shot the sun had a line of Nereïds nodding, laughing, sparkling to him. Skepsey enjoyed it, at the back of thoughts military and naval. Visible sea, this girdle

of Britain, inspired him to exultations in reverence. He wished Mr. Durance could behold it now and have such a breastful. He was wishing he knew a song of Britain and sea, rather fancying Mr. Durance to be in some way a bar to patriotic poetical recollection, when he saw his Captain Dartrey mounting steps out of an iron anatomy of the pier, and looking like a razor off a strap.

“Why, sir!” cried Skepsey.

“Just a plunge and a dozen strokes,” Dartrey said; “and you’ll come to my hotel and give me ten minutes of the ‘recreation;’ and if you don’t come willingly, I shall insult your country.”

“Ah! I wish Mr. Durance were here,” Skepsey rejoined.

“It would upset his bumboat of epigrams. He rises at ten o’clock to a queasy breakfast by candlelight, and proceeds to composition. His picture of the country is a portrait of himself by the artist.”

“But, sir, Captain Dartrey, you don’t think as Mr. Durance does of England!”

“There are lots to flatter her, Skepsey!

A drilling can't do her harm. You're down to see Miss Nesta. Ladies don't receive quite so early. And have you breakfasted? Come on with me quick." Dartrey led him on, saying: "You have an eye at my stick. It was a legacy to me, by word of mouth, from a seaman of a ship I sailed in, who thought I had done him a service; and he died after all. He fell overboard drunk. He perished of the villain stuff. One of his messmates handed me the stick in Cape Town, sworn to deliver it. A good knot to grasp; and it's flexible and strong; stick or rattan, whichever you please; it gives point or caresses the shoulder; there's no break in it, whack as you may. They call it a Demerara supple-jack. I'll leave it to you."

Skepsey declared his intention to be the first to depart. He tried the temper of the stick, bent it a bit, and admired the prompt straightening.

"It would give a good blow, sir."

"Does its business without braining."

Perhaps for the reason, that it was not a handsome instrument for display on fashionable

promenades, Dartrey chose it among his collection by preference; as ugly dogs of a known fidelity are chosen for companions. The Demerara supple-jack surpasses bull-dogs in its fashion of assisting the master; for when once at it, the clownish-looking thing reflects upon him creditably, by developing a refined courtliness of style, while in no way showing a diminution of jolly ardour for the fray. It will deal you the stroke of a bludgeon with the playfulness of a cane. It bears resemblance to those accomplished natural actors, who conversationally present a dramatic situation in two or three spontaneous flourishes, and are themselves again, men of the world, the next minute.

Skepsey handed it back. He spoke of a new French rifle. He mentioned, in the form of query for no answer, the translation of the barking little volume he had shown to Mr. Barmby: he slapped at his breast-pocket, where it was. Not a ship was on the sea-line; and he seemed to deplore that vacancy.

“But it tells both ways,” Dartrey said.

"We don't want to be hectoring in the Channel. All we want, is to be sure of our power, so as not to go hunting and fawning for alliances. Up along that terrace Miss Nesta lives. Brighton would be a choice place for a landing."

Skepsey temporized, to get his national defences, by pleading the country's love of peace.

"Then you give-up your portion of the gains of war—an awful disgorgement," said Dartrey. "If you are really for peace, you toss all your spare bones to the war-dogs. Otherwise, Quakerly preaching is taken for hypocrisy."

"I'm afraid we are illogical, sir," said Skepsey, adopting one of the charges of Mr. Durance, to elude the abominable word.

"In you run, my friend." Dartrey sped him up the steps of the hotel.

A little note lay on his breakfast-table. His invalid uncle's valet gave the morning's report of the night.

The note was from Mrs. Blathenoy: she begged Captain Dartrey, in double under-

linings of her brief words, to mount the stairs. He debated, and he went.

She was excited, and showed a bosom compressed to explode: she had been weeping. "My husband is off. He bids me follow him. What would you have me do?"

"Go."

"You don't care what may happen to your friends, the Radnors?"

"Not at the cost of your separation from your husband."

"You have seen him!"

"Be serious."

"Oh, you cold creature! You know—you see: I can't conceal. And you tell me to go. 'Go'! Gracious heavens! I've no claim on you; I haven't been able to do much; I would have—never mind! believe me or not. And now I'm to *go*: on the spot, I suppose. You've seen the man I'm to go to, too. I would bear it, if it were not away from . . . out of sight of— I'm a fool of a woman, I know. There's frankness for you! and I could declare you're saying 'impudence' in your heart—or what you have for one. Have you one?"

"My dear soul, it's a flint. So just think of your duty." Dartrey played the horrid part of executioner with some skill.

Her bosom sprang to descend into abysses.

"And never a greater fool than when I sent for you to see such a face as I'm showing!" she cried, with lips that twitched and fingers that plucked at her belt. "But you might feel my hatred of being tied to—dragged about over the Continent by that . . . perhaps you think a woman is not sensible of vulgarity in her husband! I'm bothering you? I don't say I have the slightest claim. You never made love to me, never! Never so much as pressed my hand or looked. Others have—as much as I let them. And before I saw you, I had not an idea of another man but that man. So you advise me to go?"

"There's no other course."

"No other course. I don't see one. What have I been dreaming of! Usually a woman feeling . . ." she struck at her breast, "has had a soft word in her ear. 'Go'! I don't blame you, Captain Dartrey. At least, you're not the man to punish a woman for stripping

herself, as I've done. I call myself a fool—I'm a lunatic. Trust me with your hand."

"There you are."

She grasped the hand, and shut her eyes to make a long age of the holding on to him. "Oh, you dear dear fellow!—don't think me unwomanly; I must tell you now: I am naked and can't disguise. I see you are ice—feel: and if you were different, I might be. You won't be hurt by hearing you've made yourself dear to me—without meaning to, I know! It began that day at Lakelands; I fell in love with you the very first minute I set eyes on you. There's a confession for a woman to make!—and a married woman! I'm married, and I no more feel allegiance, as they call it, than if there never had been a ceremony and no Jacob Blathenoy was in existence. And why I should go to him!—But you shan't be troubled. I did not begin to live, as a woman, before I met you. I can speak all this to you because—we women can't be deceived in that—you are one of the men who can be counted on for a friend."

"I hope so," Dartrey said, and his mouth

hardened as nature's electricity shot sparks into him from the touch and rocked him.

"No, not yet: I will soon let it drop," said she, and she was just then thrillingly pretty; she caressed the hand, placing it at her throat and moving her chin on it, as women fondle birds. "I am positively to go, then?"

"Positively, you are to go; and it's my command."

"Not in love with anyone at all?"

"Not with a soul."

"Not with a woman?"

"With no woman."

"Nor maid?"

"No! and no to everything. And an end to the catechism!"

"It is really a flint that beats here?" she said, and with a shyness in adventurousness, she struck the point of her forefinger on the rib. "Fancy me in love with a flint! And running to be dutiful to a Jacob Blathenoy, at my flint's command. I'm half in love with doing what I hate, because this cold thing here bids me do it. I believe I married for

money, and now it looks as if I were to have my bargain with poverty to bless it."

"There I may help," said Dartrey, relieved at sight of a loophole, to spring to some initiative out of the paralysis cast on him by a pretty little woman's rending of her veil. A man of honour alone with a woman who has tossed concealment to the winds, is a riddled target indeed: he is tempted to the peril of cajoling, that he may escape from the torment and the ridicule; he is tempted to sigh for the gallant spirit of his naughty adolescence. "Come to me—will you?—apply to me, if there's ever any need. I happen to have money. And forgive me for naming it."

She groaned: "Don't! I'm sure, and I thought it from the first, you're one of the good men, and the woman who meets you is lucky, and wretched, and so she ought to be! Only to you should I! . . . do believe that! I won't speak of what excuses I've got. You've seen."

"Don't think of them: there'll be danger in it."

"Shall you think of me in danger?"

"Silly, silly! Don't you see you have to do with a flint! I've gone through fire. And if I were in love with you, I should start you off to your husband this blessed day."

"And you're not the slightest wee wee bit in love with me!"

"Perfectly true; but I like you; and if we're to be hand in hand, in the time to-come, you must walk firm at present."

"I'm to go to-day?"

"You are."

"Without . . . one? I dare say we shan't meet again."

The riddled target kicked. Dartrey contrasted Jacob Blathenoy with the fair wife, and commiseratingly exonerated her; he lashed at himself for continuing to be in this absurdest of postures, and not absolutely secure for all that. His head shook. "Friends, you'll find best."

"Well!" she sighed, "I feel I'm doomed to go famished through life. There's never to be such a thing as love, for me! I can't tell you—no woman could: though you'll say

I've told enough. I shall burn with shame when I think of it. I could go on my knees to have your arms round me once. I could kill myself for saying it!—I should feel that I had one moment of real life.—I know I ought to admire you. They say a woman hates if she's refused. I can't: I wish I were able to. I could have helped the Radnors better by staying here and threatening never to go to him unless he swore not to do them injury. He's revengeful. Just as you like. You say 'Go,' and I go. There. I may kiss your hand?"

"Give me yours."

Dartrey kissed the hand. She kissed the mark of his lips. He got himself away, by promising to see her to the train for Paris. Outside her door, he was met by the reflection, coming as a thing external, that he might veraciously and successfully have pleaded a passionate hunger for breakfast: nay, that he would have done so, if he had been downright in earnest. For she had the prettiness to cast a spell; a certain curve at the lips, a fluttering droop of the eyelids, a corner of the eye,

that led long distances away to forests and nests. This little woman had the rosy-peeping June bud's plumpness. What of the man who refused to kiss her once? Cold antecedent immersion had to be thanked; and stringent vacuity; perhaps a spotting ogre-image of her possessor. Some sense of right-doing also, we hope. Dartrey angrily attributed his good conduct to the lowest motives. He went so far as to accuse himself of having forborne to speak of breakfast, from a sort of fascinated respect for the pitch of a situation that he despised and detested. Then again, when beginning to eat, his good conduct drew on him a chorus of the jeers of all the martial comrades he had known. But he owned he would have had less excuse than they, had he taken advantage of a woman's inability, at a weak moment, to protect herself: or rather, if he had not behaved in a manner to protect her from herself. He thought of his buried wife, and the noble in the base of that poor soul; needing constantly a present helper, for the nobler to conquer. Be true man with a woman, she must be viler

than the devil has yet made one, if she does not follow a strong right lead:—but be patient, of course. And the word patience here means more than most men contain. Certainly a man like Jacob Blathenoy was a mouthful for any woman: and he had bought his wife, he deserved no pity. Not? Probably not. That view, however, is unwholesome and opens on slides. Pity of his wife, too, gets to be fervidly active with her portrait, fetches her breath about us. As for condemnation of the poor little woman, her case was not unexampled, though the sudden flare of it startled rather. Mrs. Victor could read men and women closely. Yes, and Victor, when he schemed—but Dartrey declined to be throwing blame right or left. More than by his breakfast, and in a preferable direction, he was refreshed by Skepsey's narrative of the deeds of Matilda Pridden.

“The right sort of girl for you to know, Skepsey,” he said. “The best in life is a good woman.”

Skepsey exhibited his book of the Gallic howl.

“They have their fits now and then, and they’re soon over and forgotten,” Dartrey said. “The worst of it is, that we remember.”

After the morning’s visit to his uncle, he peered at half a dozen sticks in the corner of the room, grasped their handles, and selected the Demerara supple-jack, for no particular reason; the curved knot was easy to the grasp. It was in his mind, that this person signing herself Judith Marsett, might have something to say, which intimately concerned Nesta. He fell to brooding on it, until he wondered why he had not been made a trifle anxious by the reading of the note overnight. Skepsey was left at Nesta’s house.

Dartrey found himself expected by the servant waiting on Mrs. Marsett.

CHAPTER IV.

SHOWS HOW TEMPER MAY KINDLE TEMPER AND
AN INDIGNANT WOMAN GET HER WEAPON.

JUDITH MARSETT stood in her room to receive Nesta's hero. She was flushed, and had thinned her lips for utterance of a desperate thing, after the first severe formalities.

Her aim was to preserve an impressive decorum. She was at the same time burning to speak out furious wrath, in words of savage rawness, if they should come, as a manner of slapping the world's cheek for the state to which it reduces its women; whom one of the superior creatures can insult, and laugh.

Men complaining of the 'peace which is near their extinction,' have but to shuffle with the sex; they will experience as remark-

able a change as if they had passed off land on to sea.

Dartrey had some flitting notion of the untamed original elements women can bring about us, in his short observant bow to Mrs. Marsett, following so closely upon the scene with Mrs. Blathenoy.

But this handsome woman's look of the dull red line of a sombre fire, that needed only stir of a breath to shoot the blaze, did not at all alarm him. He felt refreshingly strung by it.

She was discerned at a glance to be an aristocratic member of regions where the senses perpetually simmer when they are not boiling. The talk at the Club recurred to him. How could Nesta have come to know the woman? His questioning of the chapter of marvellous accidents, touched Nesta simply, as a young girl to be protected, without abhorrently involving the woman. He had his ideas of the Spirit of Woman stating her case to the One Judge, for lack of an earthly just one: a story different from that which is proclaimed pestilential by the body of censors under conservatory glass; where

flesh is delicately nurtured, highly prized ; spirit not so much so ; and where the pretty tricking of the flesh is taken for a spiritual ascendancy.

In spite of her turbulent breast's burden to deliver, Mrs. Marsett's feminine acuteness was alive upon Dartrey, confirming here and there Nesta's praises of him. She liked his build and easy carriage of a muscular frame : her Ned was a heavy man. More than Dartrey's figure, as she would have said, though the estimate came second, she liked his manner with her. Not a doubt was there, that he read her position. She could impose upon some : not upon masculine eyes like these. They did not scrutinize, nor ruffle a smooth surface with a snap at petty impressions ; and they were not cynically intimate or dominating or tentatively amorous : clear good fellowship was in them. And it was a blessedness (whatever might be her feeling later, when she came to thank him at heart) to be in the presence of a man whose appearance breathed of offering her common ground, whereon to meet and speak together, un-

burdened by the hunting world, and by the stoneing world. Such common ground seems a kind of celestial to the better order of those excluded from it.

Dartrey relieved her midway in a rigid practise of the formalities: "I think I may guess that you have something to tell me relating to Miss Radnor?"

"It is." Mrs. Marsett gathered up for an immediate plunge, and deferred it. "I met her—we went out with the riding-master. She took to me. I like her—I could say" (the woman's voice dropped dead low, in a tremble), "I love her. She is young:—I could kneel to her. Do you know a Major Worrell?"

"Worrell? no."

"He is a—calls himself a friend of my—of Captain Marsett's. He met us out one day."

"He permitted himself to speak to Miss Radnor?"

She rejoiced in Dartrey's look. "Not then. First let me tell you. I can hardly tell you. But Miss Radnor tells me you are not like

other men. You have made your conclusions already. Are you asking what right I had to be knowing her? It is her goodness. Accident began it; I did not deceive her; as soon as ever I could I—I have Captain Marsett's promise to me: at present he's situated, he—but I opened my heart to her: as much as a woman can. It came! Did I do very wrong?"

"I'm not here to decide: continue, pray."

Mrs. Marsett aimed at formal speech, and was driving upon her natural in anger. "I swear I did it for the best. She is an innocent girl . . . young lady: only she has a head; she soon reads things. I saw the kind of cloud in her. I spoke. I felt bound to: she said she would not forsake me.—I was bound to! And it was enough to break my heart, to think of her despising me. No, she forgave, pitied; she was kind. Those are the angels who cause us to think of changeing. I don't care for sermons, but when I meet charity:—I won't bore you!"

"You don't."

"My . . . Captain Marsett can't bear—he

calls it Psalmody. He thinks things ought always to be as they are, with women and men; and women preachers he does detest. She is not one to preach. You are waiting to hear what I have to tell. That man Major Worrell has tried to rob me of everything I ever had to set a value on:—love, I'd say;—he laughs at a woman like me loving.”

Dartrey nodded, to signify a known sort of fellow.

“She came here.” Mrs. Marsett's tears had risen. “I ought not to have let her come. I invited her—for once: I am lonely. None of my sex—none I could respect! I meant it for only once. She promised to sing to me. And, Oh! how she sings! You have heard her. My whole heart came out. I declare I believe girls exist who can hear our way of life—and I'm not so bad except compared with that angel, who heard me, and was and is, I could take oath, no worse for it. Some girls can; she is one. I am all for bringing them up in complete innocence. If I was a great lady, my daughters should never know anything of the world until they

were married. But Miss Radnor is a young lady who cannot be hurt. She is above us. Oh! what a treasure for a man!—and my God! for any man born of woman to insult a saint, as she is!—He is a beast!”

“Major Worrell met her here?”

“Blame me as much as you like: I do myself. Half my rage with him is at myself for putting her in the way of such a beast to annoy. Each time she came, I said it was to be the last. I let her see what a mercy from heaven she was to me. She would come. It has not been many times. She wishes me either to . . . Captain Marsett has promised. And nothing seems hard to me when my own God’s angel is by. She is! I’m not such a bad woman, but I never before I knew her knew the meaning of the word virtue. There is the young lady that man worried with his insulting remarks! though he must have known she was a lady:—because he found her in my rooms.”

“You were present when, as you say, he insulted her?”

“I was. Here it commenced; and he would see her downstairs.”

"You heard?"

"Of course, I never left her."

"Give me a notion . . ."

"To get her to make an appointment: to let him conduct her home."

"She was alone?"

"Her maid was below"

"And this happened . . .?"

"Yesterday, after dark. My Ned—Captain Marsett encourages him to be familiar. I should be the lowest of women if I feared the threats of such a reptile of a man. I could tell you more. I can't always refuse his visits, though if Ned knew the cur he is! Captain Marsett is easy-going."

"I should like to know where he lives."

She went straight to the mantelpiece, and faced about with a card, handing it, quite aware that it was a charge of powder.

Desperate things to be done excused the desperate said; and especially they seemed a cover to the bald and often spotty language leaping out of her, against her better taste, when her temper was up.

"Somewhere not very distant," said

Dartrey, perusing. "Is he in the town to-day, do you know?"

"I am not sure; he may be. Her name . . ."

"Have no fear. Ladies names are safe."

"I am anxious that she may not be insulted again."

"Did she show herself conscious of it?"

"She stopped speaking: she looked at the door. She may come again—or never! through that man!"

"You receive him, at his pleasure?"

"Captain Marsett wishes me to. He is on his way home. He calls Major Worrell my pet spite. All I want is, not to hear of the man. I swear he came yesterday on the chance of seeing—for he forced his way up past my servant; he must have seen Miss Radnor's maid below."

"You don't mean, that he insulted her hearing?"

"Oh! Captain Fenellan, you know the style."

"Well, I thank you," Dartrey said. "The young lady is the daughter of my dearest

friends. She's one of the precious—you're quite right. Keep the tears back."

"I will." She heaved open-mouthed to get physical control of the tide. "When you say that of her!—how can I help it? It's I fear—because I fear . . . and I've no right to expect ever . . . but if I'm never again to look on that dear face, tell her I shall—I shall pray for her in my grave. Tell her she has done all a woman can, an angel can, to save my soul. I speak truth: my very soul! I could never go to the utter bad after knowing her. I don't—you know the world—I'm a poor helpless woman!—don't swear to give up my Ned if he does break the word he promised once; I can't see how I could. I haven't her courage. I haven't—what it is!—You know her: it's in her eyes and her voice. If I had her beside me, then I could starve or go to execution—I could, I am certain. Here I am, going to do what you men hate. Let me sit."

"Here's a chair," said Dartrey. "I've no time to spare; good day, for the present. You will permit me to call."

“Oh! come;” she cried, out of her sobs, for excuse. They were genuine, or she would better have been able to second her efforts to catch a distinct vision of his retreating figure.

She beheld him, when he was in the street, turn for the district where Major Worrell had his lodgings. That set her mind moving, and her tears fell no longer.

Major Worrell was not at home. Dartrey was informed, that he might be at his Club.

At the Club he heard of the major as having gone to London and being expected down in the afternoon. Colonel Sudley named the train: an early train; the major was engaged to dine at the Club. Dartrey had information supplied to him concerning Major Worrell and Captain Marsett, also Mrs. Marsett. She had a history. Worthy citizens read the description of history with interest when the halo of Royalty is round it. They may, if their reading extends, perceive, that it has been the main turbid stream in old Mammon's train since he threw his

bait for flesh. They might ask, too, whether it is likely to cease to flow while he remains potent. The lady's history was brief, and bore recital in a Club; came off quite honourably there. Regarding Major Worrell, the tale of him showed him to have a pass among men. He managed cleverly to get his pleasures out of a small income and a 'fund of anecdote.' His reputation indicated an anecdotist of the table, prevailing in the primitive societies, where the art of conversing does not come by nature, and is exercised in monosyllabic undertones or grunts until the narrator's well-masticated popular anecdote loosens a digestive laughter, and some talk ensues. He was Marsett's friend, and he boasted of not letting Ned Marsett make a fool of himself.

Dartrey was not long in shaping the man's character: Worrell belonged to the male birds of upper air, who mangle what female prey they are forbidden to devour. And he had Miss Radnor's name: he had spoken her name at the Club overnight. He had roused a sensation, because of a man being present,

Percy Southweare, who was related to a man as good as engaged to marry her. The major never fell into a quarrel with sons of nobles, if he could help it, or there might have been a pretty one.

So Colonel Sudley said.

Dartrey spoke musing: "I don't know how he may class me; I have an account to square with him."

"It won't do in these days, my good friend. Come and cool yourself; and we'll lunch here. I shan't leave you."

"By all means. We'll lunch, and walk up to the station, and you will point him out to me."

Dartrey stated Major Worrell's offence. The colonel was not astonished; but evidently he thought less of Worrell's behaviour to Miss Radnor in Mrs. Marsett's presence than of the mention of her name at the Club: and that, he seemed to think, had a shade of excuse against the charge of monstrous. He blamed the young lady who could go twice to visit a Mrs. Marsett; partly exposed a suspicion of her. Dartrey let him talk.

They strolled along the parade, and were near the pier.

Suddenly saying: "There, beside our friend in clerical garb: here she comes; judge if that is the girl for the foulest of curs to worry, no matter where she's found," Dartrey directed the colonel's attention to Nesta and Mr. Barmby turning off the pier and advancing.

He saluted. She bowed. There was no contraction of her eyelids; and her face was white. The mortal life appeared to be deadened in her cold wide look; as when the storm-wind banks a leaden remoteness, leaving blown space of sky.

The colonel said: "No, that's not the girl a gentleman would offend."

"What man!" cried Dartrey. "If we had a Society for the trial of your gentleman!—but he has only to call himself gentleman to get grant of licence: and your Society protects him. It won't punish, and it won't let you. But you saw her: ask yourself—what man could offend that girl!"

“Still, my friend, she ought to keep clear of the Marsetts.”

“When I meet him, I shall treat him as one out of the law.”

“You lead on to an ultimate argument with the hangman.”

“We’ll dare it, to waken the old country. Old England will count none but Worrells in time. As for discreet, if you like!—the young lady might have been more discreet. She’s a girl with a big heart. If we were all everlastingly discreet!”

Dartrey may have meant, that the consequence of a prolonged conformity would be the generation of stench to shock to purging tempests the tolerant heavens over such smooth stagnancy. He had his ideas about movement; about the good of women, and the health of his England. The feeling of the hopelessness of pleading Nesta’s conduct, for the perfect justification of it to son or daughter of our impressing conventional world—even to a friend, that friend a true man, a really chivalrous man!—drove him back in a silence upon his natural brother-

hood with souls that dare do. It was a wonder, to think of his finding this kinship in a woman. In a girl?—and the world holding that virgin spirit to be unclean or shadowed because its rays were shed on foul places? He clasped the girl. Her smitten clear face, the face of the second sigh after torture, bent him in devotion to her image.

The clasping and the worshipping were independent of personal ardours: quaintly mixed with semi-paternal recollections of the little ‘blue butterfly’ of the days at Craye Farm and Creckholt; and he had heard of Dudley Sowerby’s pretensions to her hand. Nesta’s youthfulness cast double age on him from the child’s past. He pictured the child; pictured the girl, with her look of solitariness of sight; as in the desolate wide world, where her noble compassion for a woman had unexpectedly, painfully, almost by transubstantiation, rack-screwed her to woman’s mind. And above sorrowful, holy were those eyes.

They held sway over Dartrey, and lost it some steps on; his demon temper urging

him to strike at Major Worrell, as the cause of her dismayed expression. He was not the happier for dropping to his nature ; but we proceed more easily, all of us, when the strain which lifts us a foot or two off our native level is relaxed.

CHAPTER V.

A PAIR OF WOOERS.

THAT ashen look of the rise out of death from one of our mortal wounds, was caused by deeper convulsions in Nesta's bosom than Dartrey could imagine.

She had gone for the walk with Mr. Barmby, reading the omen of his tones in the request. Dorothea and Virginia would have her go. The clerical gentleman, a friend of the Rev. Abram Posterley; and one who deplored poor Mr. Posterley's infatuation; and one besides who belonged to Nesta's musical choir in London; seemed a safe companion for the child. The grand organ of Mr. Barmby's voice, too, assured them of a devout seriousness in him, that arrested any scrupulous little questions. They could not

conceive his uttering the nonsensical empty stuff, compliments to their beauty and what not, which girls hear sometimes from inconsiderate gentlemen, to the having of their heads turned. Moreover, Nesta had rashly promised her father's faithful servant Skepsey to walk out with him in the afternoon; and the ladies hoped she would find the morning's walk to have been enough; good little man though Skepsey was, they were sure. But there is the incongruous for young women of station on a promenade.

Mr. Barmby headed to the pier. After pacing up and down between the briny gulls and a polka-band, he made his way forethoughtfully to the glass-sheltered seats fronting East: where, as his enthusiasm for the solemnity of the occasion excited him to say, "We have a view of the terraces and the cliffs;" and where not more than two enwrapped invalid figures were ensconced. Then it was, that Nesta recalled her anticipation of his possible design; forgotten by her during their talk of her dear people: Priscilla Graves and Mr. Pempton, and the Yatts, and

Simeon Fenellan, Peridon and Catkin, and Skepsey likewise; and the very latest news of her mother. She wished she could have run before him, to spare him. He would not notice a sign. Girls must wait and hear.

It was an oratorio. She watched the long wave roll on to the sinking into its fellow; and onward again for the swell and the weariful lapse; and up at last bursting to the sheet of white. The far-heard roar and the near commingled, giving Mr. Barmby a semblance to the powers of ocean.

At the first direct note, the burden of which necessitated a pause, she petitioned him to be her friend, to think of himself as her friend.

But a vessel laden with merchandize, that has crossed wild seas for this particular port, is hardly to be debarred from discharging its goods on the quay by simple intimations of their not being wanted. We are precipitated both by the aim and the tedium of the lengthened voyage to insist that they be seen. We believe perforce in their temptingness;

and should allurements fail, we fall back to the belief in our eloquence. An eloquence to expose the qualities they possess, is the testification in the promise of their excellence. She is to be induced by feeling to see it. We are asking a young lady for the precious gift of her hand. We respect her; and because of our continued respect, despite an obstruction, we have come to think we have a claim upon her gratitude; could she but be led to understand how different we are from some other men!—from one hitherto favoured among them, unworthy of this prize, however personally exalted and meritorious.

The wave of wide extension rolled and sank and rose, heaving lifeless variations of the sickly streaks on its dull green back.

Dudley Sowerby's defection was hinted at and accounted for, by the worldly test of worldly considerations.

What were they?—Nesta glanced.

An indistinct comparison was modestly presented, of one unmoved by worldly considerations.

But what were they? She was awakened

by a lamp, and her darkness was all inflammable to it.

“Oh! Mr. Barmby, you have done me the honour to speak before; you know my answer,” she said.

“You were then subject to an influence. A false, I may say wicked, sentiment upholding celibacy.”

“My poor Louise? She never thought of influencing me. She has her views, I mine. Our friendship does not depend on a ‘treaty of reciprocity.’ We are one at heart, each free to judge and act, as it should be in friendship. I heard from her this morning. Her brother will be able to resume his military duties next month. Then she will return to me.”

“We propose!” rejoined Mr. Barmby.

Beholding the involuntary mercurial rogue-dimple he had started from a twitch at the corner of her lips, the good gentleman pursued: “Can we dare write our designs for the month to come? Ah!—I will say—Nesta! give me the hope I beg to have. See the seriousness. You are at liberty.

That other has withdrawn his pretensions. We will not blame him. He is in expectation of exalted rank. Where there is any shadow! . . .” Mr. Barmby paused on his outroll of the word; but immediately, not intending to weigh down his gentle hearer with the significance in it, resumed at a yet more sonorous depth: “He is under the obligation to his family; an old, a venerable family. In the full blaze of public opinion! His conduct can be palliated by us, too. There is a right and wrong in minor things, independent of the higher rectitude. We pardon, we can partly support, the worldly view.”

“There is a shadow?” said Nesta; and her voice was lurefully encouraging.

He was on the footing where men are precipitated by what is within them to blunder. “On you—no. On you personally, not at all. No. It could not be deemed so. Not by those knowing, esteeming—not by him who loves you, and would, with his name, would, with his whole strength, envelop, shield . . . certainly certainly not.”

"It is on my parents?" she said.

"But to me nothing, nothing, quite naught! To confound the innocent with the guilty! . . . and excuses may exist. We know but how little we know!"

"It is on both my parents?" she said; with a simplicity that induced him to reply: "Before the world. But not, I repeat . . ."

The band-instruments behind the sheltering glass flourished on their termination of a waltz.

She had not heeded their playing. Now she said: "The music is over; we must not be late at lunch;" and she stood up and moved.

He sprang to his legs and obediently stepped out: "I shall have your answer to-day? this evening? Nesta!"

"Mr. Barmby, it will be the same. You will be kind to me in not asking me again."

He spoke further. She was dumb.

Had he done ill or well for himself and for her when he named the shadow on her parents? He dwelt more on her than on himself: he would not have wounded her to

win the blest affirmative. Could she have been entirely ignorant?—and after Dudley Sowerby's defection? For such it was: the Rev. Stuart Rem had declared the union between the almost designated head of the Cantor family and a young person of no name, of worse than no birth, impossible: "absolutely and totally impossible," he had said, in his impressive fashion, speaking from his knowledge of the family and an acquaintance with Dudley. She must necessarily have learnt why Dudley Sowerby withdrew. No parents of an attractive daughter should allow her to remain unaware of her actual position in the world. It is criminal, a reduplication of the criminality! Yet she had not spoken as one astonished. She was mysterious. Women are so: young women most of all. It is undecided still whether they do of themselves conceive principles, or should submit to an imposition of the same upon them in terrorem.—Mysterious truly, but most attractive! As Lady Bountiful of a district, she would have in her maturity the majestic stature to suit a dispensation of

earthly good things. And, strangely, here she was, at this moment, rivalling to excelling all others of her sex (he verified it in the crowd of female faces passing), when they, if they but knew the facts, would visit her very appearance beside them on a common footing as an intrusion and a scandal. To us who know, such matters are indeed wonderful !

Moved by reflective compassion, Mr. Barmby resumed the wooer's note, some few steps after he had responded to the salutation of Dartrey Fenellan and Colonel Sudley. She did not speak. She turned her forehead to him ; and the absence of the world from her eyes chilled his tongue.

He declined the pleasure of the lunch with the Duvidney ladies. He desired to be alone, to question himself fasting, to sound the deed he had done ; for he had struck on a suspicion of selfishness in it : and though Love must needs be an egoism, Love is no warrant for the doing of a hurt to the creature beloved. Thoughts upon Skepsey and the tale of his Matilda Pridden's labours in poor neighbourhoods, to which he had been inattentive

during the journey down to the sea, invaded him ; they were persistent. He was a worthy man, having within him the spiritual impulse curiously ready to take the place where a material disappointment left vacancy. The vulgar sort embrace the devil at that stage. Before the day had sunk, Mr. Barmby's lowest wish was, to be a light, as the instrument of his Church in her ministrations amid the haunts of sin and slime, to such plain souls as Daniel Skepsey and Matilda Pridden. And he could still be that, if Nesta, in the chapters of the future, changed her mind. She might ; for her good she would ; he reserved the hope. His light was one to burn beneath an extinguisher.

At the luncheon table of the Duvidney ladies, it was a pain to Dorothea and Virginia to witness how poor the appetite their Nesta brought in from the briny blowy walk. They prophesied against her chances of a good sleep at night, if she did not eat heartily. Virginia timidly remarked on her paleness. Both of them put their simple arts in motion to let her know, that she was dear to them :

so dear as to make them dread the hour of parting. They named their dread of it. They had consulted in private and owned to one another, that they did really love the child, and dared not look forward to what they should do without her. The dear child's paleness and want of appetite (they remembered they were observing a weak innocent girl) suggested to them mutually the idea of a young female heart sickening, for the old unhappy maiden reason. But, if only she might return with them to the Wells, the Rev. Stuart Rem would assure her to convince her of her not being quite quite forsaken. He, or some one having sanction from Victor, might ultimately (the ladies waiting anxiously in the next room, to fold her on the warmth of their bosoms when she had heard) impart to her the knowledge of circumstances, which would, under their further tuition concerning the particular sentiments of great families and the strict duties of the scions of the race, help to account for and excuse the Hon. Dudley Sowerby's behaviour.

They went up to the drawing-room, talking

of Skepsey and his tale of Miss Pridden, for Nesta's amusement. Any talk of her Skepsey usually quickened her lips to reminiscent smiles and speech. Now she held on to gazing; and sadly, it seemed; as if some object were not present.

For a vague encouragement, Dorothea said: "One week, and we are back home at Moors-edge!"—not so far from Cronidge, was implied, for the administering of some foolish temporary comfort. And it was as when a fish on land springs its hollow sides in alien air for the sustaining element; the girl panted; she clasped Dorothea's hand and looked at Virginia: "My mother—I must see her!" she said. They were slightly stupefied by the unwonted mention of her mother. They made no reply. They never had done so when there was allusion to her mother. Their silence now struck a gong at the girl's bosom.

Dorothea had it in mind to say, that if she thirsted for any special comfort, the friends about her would offer consolation for confidence.

Before she could speak, Perrin the footman

entered, bearing the card of the Hon. Dudley Sowerby.

Mr. Dudley Sowerby begged for an immediate interview with Miss Radnor.

The ladies were somewhat agitated, but no longer perplexed as to their duties. They had quitted Moorsedge to avoid the visit of his family. If he followed, it signified that which they could not withstand :—"the Tivoli falls!" as they named the fateful tremendous human passion, from the reminiscences of an impressive day on their travels in youth; when the leaping torrent had struck upon a tale of love they were reading. They hurriedly entreated Nesta to command her nerves; peremptorily requested her to stay where she was; showed her spontaneously, by way of histrionic adjuration, the face to be worn by young ladies at greetings on these occasions; kissed her and left her; Virginia whispering: "He is true!"

Dudley entered the drawing-room, charged with his happy burden of a love that had passed through the furnace. She stood near a window, well in the light; she hardly gave

him welcome. His address to her was hurried, rather uncertain, coherent enough between the drop and the catch of articulate syllables. He found himself holding his hat. He placed it on the table, and it rolled foolishly; but soon he was by her side, having two free hands to claim her one.

“You are thinking, you have not heard from me! I have been much occupied,” he said. “My brother is ill, very ill. I have your pardon?”

“Indeed you have—if it has to be asked.”

“I have it?”

“Have I to grant it?”

“I own to remissness.”

“I did not blame you.”

“Nesta! . . .”

Her coldness was unshaken.

He repeated the call of her name. “I should have written—I ought to have written!—I could not have expressed. . . . You do forgive? So many things!”

“You come from Cronidge to-day?”

“From my family—to you.”

She seemed resentful. His omissions as a

correspondent were explicable in a sentence. It had to be deferred.

Reviewing for a moment the enormous internal conflict undergone by him during the period of the silence between them, he wondered at the vastness of the love which had conquered objections, to him so poignant.

There was at least no seeing of the public blot on her birth when looking on her face. Nor when thinking of the beauty of her character, in absence or in presence, was there any. He had mastered distaste to such a degree, that he forgot the assistance he had received from the heiress for enabling him to appreciate the fair young girl. Money is the imperious requirement of superior station; and more money and more: in these our modern days of the merchant's wealth, and the miner's, and the gigantic American and Australian millionaires, high rank is of necessity vowed, in peril of utter eclipse, to the possession of money. Still it is, when assured, a consideration far to the rear with a gentleman in whose bosom love and the buzzing

world have fought their battle out. He could believe it thoroughly fought out, by the prolonged endurance of a contest lasting many days and nights; in the midst of which, at one time, the task of writing to tell her of his withdrawal from the engagement, was the cause of his omission to write.

As to her character, he dwelt on the charm of her recovered features, to repress an indicative dread of some intrepid force behind it, that might be unfeminine, however gentle the external lineaments. Her features, her present aristocratic deficiency of colour, greatly pleased him; her character would submit to moulding. Of all young ladies in the world, she should be the one to shrink from a mental independence and hold to the guidance of the man ennobling her. Did she? Her eyes were reading him. She had her father's limpid eyes, and when they concentrated rays, they shot.

"Have you seen my parents, Mr. Sowerby?"

He answered smilingly, for reassuringly:
"I have seen them."

"My mother?"

“From your mother first. But am I not to be Dudley?”

“She spoke to you? She told you?”

“And yesterday your father—a second time.”

Some remainder of suspicion in the dealing with members of this family, urged Dudley to say: “I understood from them, you were not? . . . that you were quite? . . .”

“I have heard: I have guessed: it was recently—this morning, as it happened. I wish to go to my mother to-day. I shall go to her to-morrow.”

“I might offer to conduct you—now!”

“You are kind; I have Skepsey.” She relieved the situation of its cold-toned strain in adding: “He is a host.”

“But I may come?—now! Have I not the right? You do not deny it me?”

“You are very generous.”

“I claim the right, then. Always. And subsequently, soon after, my mother hopes to welcome you at Cronidge. She will be glad to hear of your naming of a day. My father bids me . . . he and all our family.”

"They are very generous."

"I may send them word this evening of a day you name?"

"No, Mr. Sowerby."

"Dudley?"

"I cannot say it. I have to see my parents."

"Between us, surely?"

"My whole heart thanks you for your goodness to me. I am unable to say more."

He had again observed and he slightly crisped under the speculative look she directed on him: a simple unstrained look, that had an air of reading right in, and was worse to bear with than when the spark leaped upon some thought from her eyes: though he had no imagination of anything he concealed or exposed, and he would have set it down to her temporary incredulousness of his perfect generosity or power to overcome the world's opinion of certain circumstances. That had been a struggle! The peculiar look was not renewed. She spoke warmly of her gratitude. She stated, that she must of necessity see her parents at once. She submitted to

his entreaty to conduct her to them on the morrow. It was in the manner of one who yielded step by step, from inability to contend.

Her attitude continuing unchanged, he became sensible of a monotony in the speech with which he assailed it, and he rose to leave, not dissatisfied. She, at his urgent request, named her train for London in the early morning. He said it was not too early. He would have desired to be warmed; yet he liked her the better for the moral sentiment controlling the physical. He had appointments with relatives or connections in the town, and on that pretext he departed, hoping for the speedy dawn of the morrow as soon as he had turned his back on the house.

No, not he the man to have pity of women underfoot!—That was the thought, unrevolved, unphrased, all but unconscious, in Nesta: and while her heart was exalting him for his generosity. Under her present sense of the chilling shadow, she felt the comfort there was in being grateful to him

for the golden beams which his generosity cast about her. But she had an intelligence sharp to pierce, virgin though she was; and with the mark in sight, however distant, she struck it, unerring as an Artemis for blood of beasts: those shrewd young wits, on the look-out to find a champion, athirst for help upon a desolate road, were hard as any judicial to pronounce the sentence upon Dudley in that respect. She raised him high; she placed herself low; she had a glimpse of the struggle he had gone through; love of her had helped him, she believed. And she was melted; and not the less did the girl's implacable intuition read with the keenness of eye of a man of the world the blunt division in him, where warm humanity stopped short at the wall of social concrete forming a part of this rightly esteemed young citizen. She, too, was divided: she was at his feet; and she rebuked herself for daring to judge—or rather, it was, for having a reserve in her mind upon a man proving so generous with her. She was pulled this way and that by sensibilities both inspiring to

blind gratitude and quickening her penetrative view. The certainty of an unerring perception remained.

Dorothea and Virginia were seated in the room below, waiting for their carriage, when the hall-door spoke of the Hon. Dudley's departure; soon after, Nesta entered to them. She swam up to Dorothea's lap, and dropped her head on it, kneeling.

The ladies feared she might be weeping. Dorothea patted her thick brown twisted locks of hair. Unhappiness following such an interview, struck them as an ill sign.

Virginia bent to the girl's ear, and murmured: "All well?"

She replied: "He has been very generous."

Her speaking of the words renewed an oppression, that had darkened her on the descent of stairs. For sensibilities sharp as Nesta's, are not to be had without their penalties: and she who had gone nigh to summing in a flash the nature of Dudley, sank suddenly under that affliction often besetting the young adventurous mind, crushing to young women:—the fascination exer-

cised upon them by a positive adverse masculine attitude and opinion. Young men know well what it is : and if young women have by chance overcome their timidity, to the taking of any step out of the trim pathway, they shrink, with a sense of forlornest isolation. It becomes a subjugation ; inciting to revolt, but a heavy weight to cast off. Soon it assumed its material form for the contention between her and Dudley, in the figure of Mrs. Marsett. The Nesta who had been instructed to know herself to be under a shadow, heard, she almost justified Dudley's reproaches to her, for having made the acquaintance of the unhappy woman, for having visited her, for having been, though but for a minute, at the mercy of a coarse gentleman's pursuit. The recollection was a smart buffet.

Her lighted mind punished her thus through her conjuring of Dudley's words, should news of her relations with Mrs. Marsett reach him :—and she would have to tell him. Would he not say : ‘ I have borne with the things concerning your family. All the

greater reason why I must insist . . . ' he would assuredly say he insisted (her humour caught at the word, as being the very word one could foresee and clearly see him uttering in a fit of vehemence) on her immediate abandonment of ' that woman.'

And with Nesta's present enlightenment by dusky beams, upon her parentage, she listened abjectly to Dudley, or the opinion of the majority. Would he not say or think, that her clinging to Mrs. Marsett put them under a kind of common stamp, or gave the world its option to class them together?

These were among the ideas chasing in a head destined to be a battle-field for the enrichment of a harvest-field of them, while the girl's face was hidden on Dorothea's lap, and her breast heaved and heaved.

She distressed them when she rose, by saying she must instantly see her mother.

They saw the pain their hesitation inflicted, and Dorothea said: "Yes, dear; any day you like."

"To-morrow—I must go to her to-morrow!"

A suggestion of her mother's coming down, was faintly spoken by one lady, echoed in a quaver by the other.

Nesta shook her head. To quiet the kind souls, she entreated them to give their promise that they would invite her again.

Imagining the Hon. Dudley to have cast her off, both ladies embraced her : not entirely yielding-up their hearts to her, by reason of the pernicious new ideas now in the world to sap our foundations of morality ; which warned them of their duty to uphold mentally his quite justifiable behaviour, even when compassionating the sufferings of the guiltless creature loved by them.

CHAPTER VI.

CONTAINS DEEDS UNRELATED AND EXPOSITIONS
OF FEELINGS.

ALL through the afternoon and evening Skepsey showed indifference to meals by continuing absent: and he was the one with whom Nesta would have felt at home; more at home than with her parents. He and the cool world he moved in were a transparency of peace to her mind; even to his giving of some portion of it, when she had the dear little man present to her in a vivid image of a fish in a glass-globe, wandering round and round, now and then shooting across, just as her Skepsey did: he carried his head semi-horizontally at his arrowy pace; plain to read though he was, he appeared, under that image created of him, animated by motives inducing to speculation.

She thought of him till she could have reproached him for not returning and helping her to get away from the fever of other thoughts:—this anguish twisting about her parents, and the dreadful trammels of gratitude to a man afflictively generous, the frown of congregated people.

The latter was the least of evils ; she had her charges to bring against them for injustice : uncited, unstirred charges, they were effective as a muffled force to sustain her : and the young who are of healthy lively blood and clean conscience have either emotion or imagination to fold them defensively from an enemy world ; whose power to drive them forth into the wilderness they acknowledge. But in the wilderness their souls are not beaten down by breath of mortals ; they burn straight flame there up to the parent Spirit.

She could not fancy herself flying thither ;—where to be shorn and naked and shivering is no hardship, for the solitude clothes, and the sole true life in us resolves to that steady flame ;—she was restrained by Dudley's generosity, which held her fast to have the

forgiveness for her uncommitted sin dashed in her face. He surprised her; the unexpected quality in him seemed suddenly to have snared her fast; and she did not obtain release after seeing behind it;—seeing it, by the light of what she demanded, personal, shallow, a lover's generosity. So her keen intellect saw it; and her young blood (for the youthful are thus divided) thrilled in thinking it must be love! The name of the sacred passion lifted it out of the petty cabin of the individual into a quiring cathedral universal, and subdued her. It subdued her with an unwelcome touch of tenderness when she thought of it as involving tenderness for her mother, some chivalrous respect for her mother. Could he love the daughter without some little, which a more intimate knowledge of her dear mother would enlarge? The girl's heart flew to her mother, clung to her, vindicated her dumbly. It would not inquire, and it refused to hear, hungering the while. She sent forth her flights of stories in elucidation of the hidden; and they were like white bird after bird

winging to covert beneath a thundercloud ; until her breast ached for the voice of the thunder : harsh facts : sure as she was of her never losing her filial hold of the beloved. She and her mother grew together, they were one. Accepting the shadow, they were the closer one beneath it. She had neither vision nor active thought of her father, in whom her pride was.

At the hour of ten, the ladies retired for the enjoyment of their sweet reward. Manton, their maid, came down to sit with Nesta on the watch for Skepsey. Perrin, the footman, returning, as late as twenty minutes to eleven, from his tobacco promenade along the terrace, reported to Manton "a row in town" ; and he repeated to Nesta the policeman's opinion and his own of the "Army" fellows, and the way to treat them. Both were for rigour.

"The name of 'Army' attracts poor Skepsey so, I am sure he would join it, if they would admit him," Nesta said.

"He has an immense respect for a young woman, who belongs to his 'Army' ; and one

doesn't know what may have come," said Manton.

Two or three minutes after eleven, a feeble ring at the bell gained admission for some person : whispering was heard in the passage. Manton played eavesdropper, and suddenly bursting on Skepsey, arrested him when about to dash upstairs. His young mistress's voice was a sufficient command ; he yielded ; he pitched a smart sigh and stepped into her presence for his countenance to be seen, or the show of a countenance, that it presented.

"Skepsey wanted to rush to bed without saying good night to me?" said she ; leaving unnoticed, except for woefulness of tone, his hurried shuffle of remarks on "his appearance," and "little accidents;" ending with an inclination of his disgraceful person to the doorway, and a petition : "If I might, Miss Nesta?" The implied pathetic reference to a surgically-treated nose under a cross of strips of plaster, could not obtain dismissal for him. And he had one eye of sinister hue, showing beside its lighted-grey fellow as if a sullen punished dragon-whelp had couched

near some quick wood-pigeon. The two eyes blinked rapidly. He was a picture of Guilt in the nude, imploring to be sent into concealment.

The cruelty of detaining him was evident.

"Yes, if you must," Nesta said. "But, dear Skepsey, will it be the magistrate again to-morrow?"

He feared it would be; he fancied it would needs be. He concluded by stating, that he was bound to appear before the magistrate in the morning; and he begged assistance to keep it from the knowledge of the Miss Duvidneys, who had been so kind to him.

"Has there been bailing of you again, Skepsey?"

"A good gentleman, a resident," he replied; "a military gentleman; indeed, a colonel of the cavalry; but, it may so be, retired; and anxious about our vast possessions; though he thinks a translation of a French attack on England unimportant. He says, the Germans despise us most."

"Then this gentleman thinks you have a good case?"

“He is a friend of Captain Dartrey’s.”

Hearing that name, Nesta said: “Now, Skepsey, you must tell me everything. You are not to mind your looks. I believe, I do always believe you mean well.”

“Miss Nesta, it depends upon the magistrate’s not being prejudiced against the street-processionists.”

“But you may expect justice from the magistrate, if your case is good?”

“I would not say no, Miss Nesta. But we find, the opinion of the public has its effect with magistrates—their sentences. They are severe on boxing. They have latterly treated the ‘Army’ with more consideration, owing to the change in the public view. I myself have changed.”

“Have you joined it?”

“I cannot say I am a member of it.”

“You walked in the ranks to-day, and you were maltreated? Your friend was there?”

“I walked with Matilda Pridden; that is, parallel, along the pavement.”

“I hope she came out of it unhurt?”

"It is thanks to Captain Dartrey, Miss Nesta."

This time Nesta looked her question.

Manton interposed: "You are to speak, Mr. Skepsey;" and she stopped a flood of narrative, that was knocking in his mind to feel its head and to leap—an uninterrupted half-minute more would have shaped the story for the proper flow.

He began, after attending to the throb of his bruises in a manner to correct them rather than solace; and the beginning was the end: "Captain Dartrey rescued us, before Matilda Pridden suffered harm, to mention—the chin, slight, teeth unshaken; a beautiful set. She is angry with Captain Dartrey, for having recourse to violence in her defence: it is against her principles. 'Then you die,' she says; and our principles are to gain more by death. She says, we are alive in them; but worse if we abandon them for the sake of living.—I am a little confused; she is very abstruse.—Because, *that* is the corruptible life, she says. I have found it quite impossible to argue with her; she has always

a complete answer; wonderful. In case of Invasion, we are to lift our voices to the Lord; and the Lord's will shall be manifested. If we are robbed, we ask, How came we by the goods. It is unreasonable; it strikes at rights of property. But I have to go on thinking. When in danger, she sings without excitement. When the blow struck her, she stopped singing only an instant. She says, no one fears, who has real faith. She will not let me call her brave. She cannot admire Captain Dartrey. Her principles are opposed. She said to him, 'Sir, you did what seemed to you right.' She thinks every blow struck sends us back to the state of the beasts. Her principles. . . ."

"How was it Captain Dartrey happened to be present, Skepsey?"

"She is very firm. You cannot move her. —Captain Dartrey was on his way to the station, to meet a gentleman from London, Miss Nesta. He carried a stick—a remarkable stick—he had shown to me in the morning, and he has given it me now. He says, he has done his last with it. He seems to

have some of Matilda Pridden's ideas about fighting, when it's over. He was glad to be rid of the stick, he said."

"But who attacked you? What were the people?"

"Captain Dartrey says, England may hold up her head while she breeds young women like Matilda Pridden:—right or wrong, he says: it is the substance."

Hereupon Manton, sick of Miss Pridden, shook the little man with a snappish word, to bring him to attention. She got him together sufficiently for him to give a lame version of the story; flat until he came to his heroine's behaviour, when he brightened a moment, and he sank back absorbed in her principles and theories of life. It was understood by Nesta, that the processionists, going at a smart pace, found their way blocked and were assaulted in one of the side-streets; and that Skepsey rushed to the defence of Matilda Pridden; and that, while they were engaged, Captain Dartrey was passing at the end of the street, and recognized one he knew in the thick of it and getting the worst of it,

owing to numbers. "I will show you the stick he did it with, Miss Nesta;" said Skepsey, regardless of narrative; and darted out of the room to bring in the Demerara supple-jack; holding which, he became inspired to relate something of Captain Dartrey's deeds.

They gave no pleasure to his young lady, as he sadly perceived:—thus it is with the fair sex ever, so fond of heroes! She shut her eyes from the sight of the Demerara supple-jack descending right and left upon the skulls of a couple of bully lads. "That will do—you were rescued. And now go to bed, Skepsey; and be up at seven to breakfast with me," Nesta said, for his battle-damaged face would be more endurable to behold after an interval, she hoped; and she might in the morning dissociate its evil look from the deeds of Captain Dartrey.

The thought of her hero taking active part in a street-fray, was repulsive to her; it swamped his brilliancy. And this distressed her, by withdrawing the support which the thought of him had been to her since midday.

She lay for sleepless hours, while nursing a deeper pain, under oppression of repugnance to battle-dealing, blood-shedding men. It was long before she grew mindful of the absurdity of the moan recurring whenever reflection wearied. Translated into speech, it would have run: 'In a street of the town! with a stick!'—The vulgar picture pursued her to humiliation; it robbed her or dimmed her possession of the one bright thing she had remaining to her. So she deemed it during the heavy sighs of night; partly conscious, that in some strange way it was as much as tossing her to the man who never could have condescended to the pugnacious using of a stick in a street. He, on the contrary, was a cover to the shame-faced.

Her heart was weak that night. She hovered above it, but not so detached as to scorn it for fawning to one—any one—who would offer her and her mother a cover from scorn. And now she exalted Dudley's generosity, now clung to a low idea of a haven in her father's wealth; and she was unaware, that the second mood was deduced from the first.

She did know herself cowardly : she had, too, a critic in her clear head, to spurn at the creature who could think of purchasing the world's respect. Dudley's generosity sprang up to silence the voice. She could praise him, on a review of it, for delicacy, moreover ; and the delicacy laid her under a more positive obligation. Her sense of it was not without a toneless quaint faint savour of the romantic, that her humour little humorously caught at, to paint her a picture of former heroes of fiction, who win their trying lady by their perfection of good conduct on a background of high birth ; and who are not seen to be wooden before the volume closes. Her fatigue of sleeplessness plunged her into the period of poke-bonnets and peaky hats to admire him ; giving her the kind of sweetness we may imagine ourselves to get in the state of tired horse munching hay. If she had gone to her bed with a noble or simply estimable plain image of one of her friends in her heart, to sustain it, she would not have been thus abject. Skepsey's discoloured eye, and Captain Dartrey's behaviour behind it,

threw her upon Dudley's generosity, as being the shield for an outcast. Girls, who see at a time of need their ideal extinguished in its appearing tarnished, are very much at the disposal of the pressing suitor. Nesta rose in the black winter morn, summoning the best she could think of to glorify Dudley, that she might not feel so doomed.

According to an agreement overnight, she went to the bedroom of Dorothea and Virginia, to assure them of her having slept well, and say the good-bye to them and their Tasso. The little dog was the growl of a silken ball in a basket. His mistresses excused him, because of his being unused to the appearance of any person save Manton in their bedroom. Dorothea, kissing her, said : " Adieu, dear child ; and there is home with us always, remember. And, after breakfast, however it may be, you will, for our greater feeling of security, have—she has our orders—Manton—your own maid we consider too young for a guardian—to accompany you. We will not have it on our consciences, that by any possibility harm came to you

while you were under our charge. The good innocent girl we received from the hands of your father, we return to him; we are sure of that."

Nesta said: "Mr. Sowerby promised he would come."

"However it may be," Dorothea repeated her curtaining phrase.

Virginia put in a word of apology for Tasso's temper: he enjoyed ordinarily a slumber of half an hour's longer duration. He was, Dorothea feelingly added, regularity itself. Virginia murmured: "Except once!" and both were appalled by the recollection of *that night*. It had, nevertheless, caused them to reperuse the Rev. Stuart Rem's published beautiful sermon ON DIRT; the words of which were an antidote to the night of Tasso in the nostrils of Mnemosyne; so that Dorothea could reply to her sister, slightly by way of a reproof, quoting Mr. Stuart Rem at his loftiest: "'Let us not bring into the sacred precincts Dirt from the roads, but have a care to spread it where it is a fructification.'" Virginia produced the sequent

sentence, likewise weighty. Nesta stood between the thin division of their beds, her right hand given to one, her left to the other. They had the semblance of a haven out of storms.

She reflected, after shutting the door of their room, that the residing with them had been a means of casting her—it was an effort to remember how—upon the world where the tree of knowledge grows. She had eaten; and she might be the worse for it; but she was raised to a height that would not let her look with envy upon peace and comfort. Luxurious quiet people were as ripening glass-house fruits. Her bitter gathering of the knowledge of life had sharpened her intellect; and the intellect, even in the young, is, and not less usefully, hard metal rather than fallow soil. But for the fountain of human warmth at her breast, she might have been snared by the conceit of intellect, to despise the simple and conventional, or shed the pity which is charity's contempt. She had only to think of the kindness of the dear good ladies; her heart jumped to them at once. And when she fancied hearing those innocent souls of

women embracing her and reproaching her for the knowledge of life she now bore, her words down deep in her bosom were : It has helped me to bear the shock of other knowledge ! How would she have borne it before she knew of the infinitely evil ? Saving for the tender compassion weeping over her mother, she had not much acute personal grief. For this world condemning her birth, was the world tolerant of that infinitely evil ! Her intellect fortified her to be combative by day, after the night of imagination ; which splendid power is not so serviceable as the logical mind in painful seasons : for night revealed the world snorting Dragon's breath at a girl guilty of knowing its vilest. More than she liked to recall, it had driven her scorched, half withered, to the shelter of Dudley. The daylight, spreading thin at the windows, restored her from that weakness. " We will quit England," she said, thinking of her mother and herself, and then of her father's surely following them. She sighed thankfully, half way through the breakfast with Skepsey, at sight of the hour by the

clock; she was hurriedly sentient of the puzzle of her feelings, when she guessed at a chance that Dudley would be delayed. She supposed herself as possibly feeling not so well able to keep every thought of her head brooding on her mother in Dudley's company.

Skepsey's face was just sufferable by light of day, if one pitied reflecting on his honest intentions; it ceased to discolour another. He dropped a few particulars of his hero in action; but the heroine eclipsed. He was heavier than ever with his Matilda Pridden. At the hour for departure, Perrin had a conveyance at the door. Nesta sent off Skepsey with a complimentary message to Captain Dartrey. Her maid Mary begged her to finish her breakfast; Manton suggested the waiting a further two or three minutes. "We must not be late," Nesta said; and when the minute-hand of the clock marked ample time for the drive to the station, she took her seat and started, keeping her face resolutely set seaward, having at her ears the ring of a cry that was to come from Manton. But Manton was dumb; she spied

no one on the pavement who signalled to stop them. And no one was at the station to greet them. They stepped into a carriage where they were alone. Dudley with his dreaded generosity melted out of Nesta's thoughts, like the vanishing steam-wreath on the dip between the line and the downs.

She passed into music, as she always did under motion of carriages and trains, whether in happiness or sadness: and the day being one that had a sky, the scenic of music swung her up to soar. None of her heavy burdens enchained, though she knew the weight of them, with those of other painful souls. The pipeing at her breast gave wings to large and small of the visible; and along the downs went stateliest of flowing dances; a copse lengthened to forest; a pool of cattle-water caught gray for flights through enchantment. Cottage-children, wherever seen in groups, she wreathed above with angels to watch them. Her mind all the while was busy upon earth, embracing her mother, eyeing her father. Imagination and our earthly met midway, and still she flew, until she was

brought to the ground by a shot. She struggled to rise, uplifting Judith Marsett: a woman not so very much older than her own teens, in the count of years, and ages older; and the world pulling at her heels to keep her low. That unhappiest had no one but a sisterly girl to help her: and how she clung to the slender help! Who else was there?

The good and the bad in the woman struck separate blows upon the girl's resonant nature. She perceived the good, and took it into her reflections. The bad she divined: it approached like some threat of inflammation. Natures resonant as that which animated this girl, are quick at the wells of understanding: and she had her intimations of the world's wisdom in withholding contagious presences from the very many of the young, who may not have an aim, or ideal or strong human compassion, for a preservative. She was assured of her possessing it. She asked herself in her mother's voice, and answered mutely. She had the certainty: for she rebuked the slavish feverishness of the passion,

as betrayed by Mrs. Marsett; and the woman's tone, as of strung wires ringing on a rage of the wind. Then followed her cry for the man who would speak to Captain Marsett of his duty in honour. An image of one, accompanying the faster beats of her heart, beguiled her to think away from the cause. He, the one man known to her, would act the brother's part on behalf of the hapless creature.

Nesta just imagined her having supplicated him, and at once imagination came to dust. She had to thank him: she knelt to him. For the first time of her life she found herself seized with her sex's shudder in the blood.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH AGAIN WE MAKE USE OF THE OLD
LAMPS FOR LIGHTING AN ABYSMAL DARK-
NESS.

AND if Nesta had looked out of her carriage-window soon after the train began to glide, her eagle of imagination would have reeled from the heights, with very different feelings, earlier, perhaps a captive, at sight of the tardy gentleman rushing along the platform, and bending ear to the footman Perrin, and staring for one lost.

The snaky tail of the train imparted to Dudley an apprehension of the ominous in his having missed her. It wound away, and left regrets, which raised a chorus of harsh congratulations from the opposite party of his internal parliament.

Neither party could express an opinion without rousing the other to an uproar.

He had met his cousin Southweare overnight. He had heard, that there was talk of Miss Radnor. Her name was in the mouth of Major Worrell. It was coupled with the name of Mrs. Marsett. A military captain, in the succession to be Sir Edward Marsett, bestowed on her the shadow of his name.

It could be certified, that Miss Radnor visited the woman at her house. What are we to think of Miss Radnor, save that daughters of depraved parents! . . . A torture undeserved is the Centaur's shirt for driving us to lay about in all directions. He who had swallowed so much—a thunderbolt: a still undigested discharge from the perplexing heavens—jumped frantic under the pressure upon him of more, and worse. A girl getting herself talked of at a Club! And she of all young ladies should have been the last to draw round her that buzz of tongues. On such a subject!—The parents pursuing their career of cynical ostentation in London, threw an evil eye of heredity on

their offspring in the egg; making anything credible, pointing at tendencies.

An alliance with her was impossible. So said disgust. Anger came like a stronger beast, and extinguished the safety there was in the thing it consumed, by growing so excessive as to require tempering with drops of compassion; which prepared the way for a formal act of cold forgiveness; and the moment that was conceived, he had a passion to commit the horrible magnanimity, and did it on a grand scale, and dissolved his heart in the grandeur, and enslaved himself again.

Far from expungeing the doubt of her, forgiveness gave it a stamp and an edge. His renewed enslavement set him perusing his tyrant keenly, as nauseated captives do; and he saw, that forgiveness was beside the case. For this Nesta Victoria Radnor would not crave it or accept it. He had mentally played the woman to her superior vivaciousness too long for him to see her taking a culprit's attitude. What she did, she intended to do. The mother would not have encouraged her. The father idolized her;

and the father was a frank hedonist, whose blood . . . speculation on horseback gallops to barren extremes. Eyes like hers—if there had not been the miserable dupes of girls! Conduct is the sole guide to female character. That likewise may be the hypocrite's mask.

Popular artists, intent to gratify the national taste for effects called realistic, have figured in scenes of battle the raying fragments of a man from impact of a cannon-ball on his person. Truly thus it may be when flesh contends. But an image of the stricken and scattered mind of the man should, though deficient in the attraction, have a greater significance, forasmuch as it does not exhibit him entirely liquefied and showered into space; it leaves him his legs for the taking of further steps. Dudley, standing on the platform of Nesta's train, one half minute too late, according to his desire before he put himself in motion, was as wildly torn as the vapour shredded streaming to fingers and threads off the upright columnar shot of the shriek from the boiler. He wished every mad antagonism to his wishes: that he might

see her, be blind to her ; embrace, discard ; heal his wound, and tear it wider. He thanked her for the grossness of an offence precluding excuses. He was aware of a glimmer of advocacy in the very grossness. He conjured-up her features, and they said, her innocence was the sinner ; they scoffed at him for the dupe he was willing to be. She had enigma's mouth, with the eyes of morning.

More than most girls, she was the girl-Sphinx to him : because of her having ideas—or what he deemed ideas. She struck a toneing warmth through his intelligence, not dissimilar to the livelier circulation of the blood in the frame breathing mountain air. She really helped him, incited him to go along with this windy wild modern time more cheerfully, if not quite hopefully. For she had been the book of Romance he despised when it appeared as a printed volume : and which might have educated the young man to read some among our riddles in the book of humanity. The white he was ready to take for silver : the black were all black ; the spotted had received corruption's label. Her

youthful French governess Mademoiselle de Seilles was also peculiarly enigmatic at the mouth: conversant, one might expect, with the disintegrating literature of her country. In public, the two talked of St. Louis. One of them in secret visits a Mrs. Marsett. The Southweare women, the Hennen women, and Lady Evelina Reddish, were artless candid creatures in their early days, not transgressing in a glance. Lady Grace Halley had her fit of the devotional previous to marriage. No girl known to Dudley by report or acquaintance had committed so scandalous an indiscretion as Miss Radnor's: it pertained to the insolently vile.

And on that ground, it started the voluble defence. For certain suspected things will dash suspicion to the rebound, when they are very dark. As soon as the charge against her was moderated, the defence expired. He heard the world delivering its judgement upon her; and he sorrowfully acquiesced. She passed from him.

When she was cut off, she sang him in the distance a remembered saying of hers, with

the full melody of her voice. One day, treating of modern Pessimism, he had draped a cadaverous view of our mortal being in a quotation of the wisdom of the Philosopher Emperor : ' To set one's love upon the swallow is a futility.' And she, weighing it, nodded, and replied : " May not the pleasure for us remain if we set our love upon the beauty of the swallow's flight ? "

There was, for a girl, a bit of idea, real idea, in that : meaning, of course, the picture we are to have of the bird's wings in motion ; —it has often been admired. Oh ! not much of an idea in itself :—feminine and vague. But it was pertinent, opportune ; in this way she stimulated.

And the girl who could think it, and call on a Mrs. Marsett, was of the class of mixtures properly to be handed over to chemical experts for analysis !

She had her aspirations on behalf of her sex : she and Mademoiselle de Seilles discussed them ; women were to do this, do that :—necessarily a means of instructing a girl to learn what they did do. If the lower part

of her face had been as reassuring to him as the upper, he might have put a reluctant faith in the puremindedness of these aspirations, without reverting to her origin, and also to recent rumours of her father and Lady Grace Halley. As it was, he inquired of the cognizant, whether an intellectual precocity, devoted by preference to questions affecting the state of women, did not rather more than suggest the existence of urgent senses likewise. She, a girl under twenty, had an interest in public matters, and she called on a Mrs. Marsett. To plead her simplicity, was to be absolutely ignorant of her.

He neighboured sagacity when he pointed that interrogation relating to Nesta's precociousness of the intelligence. For, as they say in dactylomancy, the 'psychical' of women are not disposed in their sensitive early days to dwell upon the fortunes of their sex: a thought or two turns them facing away, with the repugnant shiver. They worship at a niche in the wall. They cannot avoid imputing some share of foulness to them that are for scouring the chamber; and the civi-

lized male, keeping his own chamber locked, quite shares their pale taper's view. The full-blooded to the finger-tips, on the other hand, are likely to be drawn to the subject, by noble inducement as often as by base : Nature at flood being the cause in either instance. This young Nature of the good and the bad, is the blood which runs to power of heart as well as to thirsts of the flesh. Then have men to sound themselves, to discover how much of Nature their abstract honourable conception or representative eidolon of young women will bear without going to pieces ; and it will not be much, unless they shall have taken instruction from the poet's pen :—for a view possibly of Nature at work to cast the slough, when they see her writhing as in her ugliest old throes. If they have learnt of Nature's priest to respect her, they will less distrust those rare daughters of hers who are moved by her warmth to lift her out of slime. It is by her own live warmth that it has to be done : cold worship at a niche in the wall will not do it.—Well, there is an index, for the enlargement of your charity.

But facts were Dudley's teachers. Physically, morally, mentally, he read the world through facts;—that is to say, through the facts he encountered: and he was in consequence foredoomed to a succession of bumps; all the heavier from his being, unlike the horned kind, not unimpressible by the hazy things outside his experience. Even at his darkest over Nesta, it was his indigestion of the misconduct of her parents, which denied to a certain still small advocate within him the right to raise a voice: that good fellow struck the attitude for pleading, and had to be silent; for he was instinct; at best a stammering speaker in the Court of the wigged Facts. Instinct of this Nesta Radnor's character would have said a brave word, but for her deeds bearing witness to her inheritance of a lawlessly adventurous temperament.

What to do? He was no nearer to an answer when the wintry dusk had fallen on the promenading crowds. To do nothing, is the wisdom of those who have seen fools perish. Facts had not taught him, that the doing nothing, for a length of days after the

first shock he sustained, was the reason of how it came that Nesta knitted closer her acquaintance with the 'agreeable lady' she mentioned in her letter to Cronidge. Those excellent counsellors of a mercantile community gave him no warnings, that the 'masterly inactive' part, so greatly esteemed by him for the conduct of public affairs, might be perilous in dealings with a vivid girl: nor a hint, that when facts continue undigested, it is because the sensations are as violent as hysterical females to block them from the understanding. His Robin Goodfellow instinct tried to be serviceable at a crux of his meditations, where Edith Averst's consumptive brothers waved faded hands at her chances of inheriting largely. Superb for the chances: but what of her offspring? And the other was a girl such as the lusty Dame Dowager of fighting ancestors would have signalled to the heir of the House's honours for the perpetuation of his race. No doubt: and the venerable Dame (beautiful in her old-lace frame, or say foliage, of the Ages backward, temp: Ed: III.) inflated him with

a thought of her : and his readings in modern books on heredity, pure blood, physical regeneration, pronounced approval of Nesta Radnor : and thereupon instinct opened mouth to speak ; and a lockjaw seized it under that scowl of his presiding mistrust of Nature.

He clung to his mistrust the more because of a warning he had from the silenced natural voice : somewhat as we may behold how the Conservatism of a Class, in a world of all the evidences showing that there is no stay to things, comes of the intuitive discernment of its finality. His mistrust was his own ; and Nesta was not ; not yet ; though a step would make her his own. Instinct prompting to the step, was a worthless adviser. It spurred him, nevertheless.

He called at the Club for his cousin Southweare, with whom he was not in sympathy ; and had information that, Southweare said, “made the girl out all right.” Girls in these days do things which the sainted stay-at-homes preceding them would not have dreamed of doing. Something had occurred, relating to Major Worrell : he withdrew Miss Radnor’s

name, acknowledged himself mistaken or amended his report of her, in some way, not quite intelligible. Dudley was accosted by Simeon Fenellan; subsequently by Dartrey. There was gossip over the latter gentleman's having been up before the magistrate, talk of a queer kind of stick, and Dartrey said, laughing, to Simeon: "Rather lucky I bled the rascal;"—whatever the meaning. She nursed one of her adorations for this man, who had yesterday, apparently, joined in a street-fray; so she partook of the stain of the turbid defacing all these disorderly people.

At his hotel, at breakfast the next morning, a newspaper furnished an account of Captain Dartrey Fenellan's participation in the strife, after mention of him as nephew of the Earl of Clanconan, "now a visitor to our town;" and his deeds were accordant with his birth. Such writing was enough to send Dudley an eager listener to Colney Durance. What a people!

Mr. Dartrey Fenellan's card compelled Dudley presently to receive him.

Dartrey, not debarred by considerations, that an allusion to Miss Radnor could be

conveyed only in the most delicately obscure manner, spared him no more than the plain English of his relations with her. Requested to come to the Club, at a certain hour of the afternoon, that he might hear Major Worrell's personal contradiction of scandal involving the young lady's name, together with his apology, etc.; Dudley declined: and he was obliged to do it curtly; words were wanting. They are hard to find for wounded sentiments rendered complex by an infusion of policy. His present mood, with the something new to digest, held the going to Major Worrell a wrong step; he behaved as if the speaking to Dartrey Fenellan pledged him hardly less. And besides he had a physical abhorrence, under dictate of moral reprobation, of the broad-shouldered sinewy man, whose look of wiry alertness pictured the previous day's gory gutters.

Dartrey set sharp eyes on him for an instant, bowed, and went.

CHAPTER VIII.

NESTA AND HER FATHER.

THE day of Nesta's return was one of a number of late when Victor was robbed of his walk Westward by Lady Grace Halley, who seduced his politeness with her various forms of blandishment to take a seat in her carriage; and she was a practical speaker upon her quarter of the world when she had him there. Perhaps she was right in saying—though she had no right to say—that he and she together might have the world under their feet. It was one of those irritating suggestions which expedite us up to a bald ceiling, only to make us feel the gas-bladder's tight extension upon emptiness. It moved him to examine the poor value of his aim, by tying him to the contemptible means.

One estimate involved the other, whichever came first. Somewhere he had an idea, that would lift and cleanse all degradations. But it did seem as if he were not enjoying: things pleasant enough in the passage of them were barren, if not prickly, in the retrospect.

He sprang out at the head of the park, for a tramp round it, in the gloom of the girdle of lights, to recover his deadened relish of the thin phantasmal strife to win an intangible prize. His dulled physical system asked, as with the sensations of a man at the start from sleep in the hurrying grip of steam, what on earth he wanted to get, and what was the substance of his gains: what! if other than a precipitous intimacy, a deep crumbling over deeper, with a little woman amusing him in remarks of a whimsical nudity; hardly more. Nay, not more! he said; and at the end of twenty paces, he saw much more; the campaign gathered a circling suggestive brilliancy, like the lamps about the winter park; the Society, lured with glitter, hooked by greed, composed a ravishing picture; the little woman was esteemed as

a serviceable lieutenant; and her hand was a small soft one, agreeable to fondle—and avaut! But so it is in war: we must pay for our allies. What if it had been, that he and she together, with their united powers . . . ? He dashed the silly vision aside, as vainer than one of the bubble-empires blown by boys; and it broke, showing no heart in it. His heart was Nataly's.

Let Colney hint his worst; Nataly bore the strain, always did bear any strain coming in the round of her duties: and if she would but walk, or if she danced at parties, she would scatter the fits of despondency besetting the phlegmatic, like this day's breeze the morning fog; or as he did with two minutes of the stretch of legs.

Full of the grandeur of that black pit of the benighted London, with its ocean-voice of the heart at beat along the lighted outer ring, Victor entered at his old door of the two houses he had knocked into one:—a surprise for Fredi!—and heard that his girl had arrived in the morning.

“And could no more endure her absence

from her Mammy O!" The songful satirical line spouted in him, to be flung at his girl, as he ran upstairs to the boudoir off the drawing-room.

He peeped in. It was dark. Sensible of presences, he gradually discerned a thick blot along the couch to the right of the door, and he drew near. Two were lying folded together; mother and daughter. He bent over them. His hand was taken and pressed by Fredi's; she spoke; she said tenderly: "Father." Neither of the two made a movement. He heard the shivering rise of a sob, that fell. The dry sob going to the waste breath was Nataly's. His girl did not speak again.

He left them. He had no thought until he stood in his dressing-room, when he said "Good!" For those two must have been lying folded together during the greater part of the day: and it meant, that the mother's heart had opened; the girl knew. Her tone: "Father," sweet, was heavy, too, with the darkness it came out of.

So she knew. Good. He clasped them

both in his heart ; tempering his pity of those dear ones with the thought, that they were of the sex which finds enjoyment in a day of the mutual tear ; and envying them ; he strained at a richness appearing in the sobs of their close union.

All of his girl's loving soul flew to her mother ; and naturally !

She would not be harsh on her father. She would say :—he loved ! And true : he did love, he does love ; loves no woman but the dear mother.

He flicked a short wring of the hand having taken pressure from an alien woman's before Fredi pressed it, and absolved himself in the act ; thinking, How little does a woman know how true we can be to her when we smell at a flower here and there !—There they are, stationary ; women the flowers, we the bee ; and we are faithful in our seeming volatility ; faithful to the hive !—And if women are to be stationary, the reasoning is not so bad. Funny, however, if they here and there imitatively spread a wing, and treat men in that way ? It is a breach of

the convention; we pay them our homage, that they may serve as flowers, not to be volatile tempters. Nataly never had been one of the sort: Lady Grace was. No necessity existed for compelling the world to bow to Lady Grace, while on behalf of his Nataly he had to . . . Victor closed the curtain over a gulf revealed by an invocation of Nature, and showing the tremendous force he partook of so largely, in her motive elements of the devourer. Horrid to behold, when we need a gracious presentation of the circumstances. She is a splendid power for as long as we confine her between the banks: but she has a passion to discover cracks; and if we give her headway, she will find one, and drive at it, and be through, uproarious in her primitive licentiousness, unless we labour body and soul like Dutchmen at the dam. Here she was, and not desired, almost detested! Nature detested! It had come about through the battle for Nataly; chiefly through Mrs. Burman's tenacious hold of the filmy thread she took for life and was enabled to use as a means for the perversion besides

bar to the happiness of creatures really living. We may well marvel at the Fates, and tell them they are not moral agents !

Victor's reflections came across Colney Durance, who tripped and stopped them.

Dressed with his customary celerity, he waited for Nesta, to show her the lighted grand double drawing-room : a further proof of how Fortune favoured him :—she was to be told, how he one day expressed a wish for greater space, and was informed on the next, that the neighbour house was being vacated, and the day following he was in treaty for the purchase of it ; returning from Tyrol, he found his place habitable.

Nesta came. Her short look at him was fond, her voice not faltering ; she laid her hand under his arm and walked round the spacious room, praising the general design, admiring the porcelain, the ferns, friezes, hangings, and the grand piano, the ebony inlaid music-stands, the fire-grates and plaques, the ottomans, the tone of neutral colour that, as in sound, muted splendour. He told her it was a reception night, with music : and

added: "I miss my . . . seen anybody lately?"

"Mr. Sowerby?" said she. "He was to have escorted me back. He may have overslept himself."

She spoke it plainly; when speaking of the dear good ladies, she set a gentle humour at play, and comforted him, as she intended, with a souvenir of her lively spirit wanting only in the manner of gaiety.

He allowed, that she could not be quite gay.

More deeply touched the next minute, he felt in her voice, in her look, in her phrasing of speech, an older, much older daughter than the Fredi whom he had conducted to Moors-edge. "Kiss me," he said.

She turned to him full-front, and kissed his right cheek and left, and his forehead, saying: "My love! my papa! my own dear dada!" all the words of her girlhood in her new sedateness; and smiling: like the moral crepuscular of a sunlighted day down a not totally inanimate Sunday London street.

He strained her to his breast. "Mama soon be here?"

“Soon.”

That was well. And possibly at the present moment applying, with her cunning hand, the cosmetics and powders he could excuse for a concealment of the traces of grief.

Satisfied in being a superficial observer, he did not spy to see more than the world would when Nataly entered the dining-room at the quiet family dinner. She performed her part for his comfort, though not prattling; and he missed his Fredi's delicious warble of the prattle running rill-like over our daily humdrum. Simeon Fenellan would have helped. Then suddenly came enlivenment: a recollection of news in the morning's paper. “No harm before Fredi, my dear. She's a young woman now. And no harm, so to speak—at least, not against the San-fredini. She has donned her name again, and a villa on Como, leaving her *duque*;—paragraph from a Milanese musical Journal; no particulars. Now, mark me, we shall have her at Lakelands in the Summer. If only we could have her now!”

"It would be a pleasure," said Nataly. Her heart had a blow in the thought, that a lady of this kind would create the pleasure by not bringing criticism.

"The godmother?" he glistened upon Nesta.

She gave him low half-notes of the little blue butterfly's imitation of the superb contralto; and her hand and head at turn to hint the theatrical operatic attitude.

"Delicious!" he cried, his eyelids were bedewed at the vision of the three of them planted in the past; and here again, out of the dark wood, where something had required to be said, and had been said; and all was happily over, owing to the goodness and sweetness of the two dear innocents;—whom heaven bless! Jealousy of their naturally closer heart-at-heart, had not a whisper for him; part of their goodness and sweetness was felt to be in the not excluding him.

Nesta engaged to sing one of the old duets with her mother. She saw her mother's breast lift in a mechanical effort to try imaginary notes, as if doubtful of her capacity,

more at home in the dumb deep sigh they fell to. Her mother's heroism made her a sacred woman to the thoughts of the girl, overcoming wonderment at the extreme submissiveness.

She put a screw on her mind to perceive the rational object there might be for causing her mother to go through tortures in receiving and visiting; and she was arrested by the louder question, whether she could think such a man as her father irrational.

People with resounding names, 'waves of a steady stream, were announced by Arlington, just as in the days, that seemed remote, before she went to Moorsedge; only they were more numerous, and some of the titles had ascended a stage. There were great lords, there were many great ladies; and Lady Grace Halley shuffling amid them, like a silken shimmer in voluminous robes. They crowded about their host where he stood. "He is their *Law!*" Colney said, speaking unintelligibly, in the absence of the Simeon Fenellan regretted so loudly by Mr. Beaves Urmsing. They had an air of worshipping,

and he of swimming. There were also City magnates, and Lakelands' neighbours: the gentleman representing Pride of Port, Sir Abraham Quatley; and Colonel Corfe; Sir Rodwell and Lady Blachington; Mrs. Fanning; Mr. Caddis. Few young men and maids were seen. Dr. John Cormyn came without his wife, not mentioning her. Mrs. Peter Yatt touched the notes for voices at the piano. Priscilla Graves was a vacancy, and likewise the Rev. Septimus Barmby. Peridon and Catkin, and Mr. Pempton took their usual places. There was no fluting. A famous Canadian lady was the principal singer. A Galician violinist, zig-zagging extreme extensions and contractions of his corporeal frame in execution, and described by Colney as "Paganini on a wall," failed to supplant Durandarte in Nesta's memory. She was asked by Lady Grace for the latest of Dudley. Sir Abraham Quatley named him with handsome emphasis. Great dames caressed her; openly approved; shadowed the future place among them.

Victor alluded at night to Mrs. John

Cormyn's absence. He said: "A homœopathic doctor's wife!" nothing more; and by that little, he prepared Nesta for her mother's explanation. The great London people, ignorant or not, were caught by the strong tide he created, and carried on it. But there was a bruiting of the secret among their set; and the one to fall away from her, Nataly marvellingly named Mrs. John Cormyn; whose marriage was of her making. She did not disapprove Priscilla's behaviour. Priscilla had come to her and, protesting affection, had openly stated, that she required time and retirement to recover her proper feelings. Nataly smiled a melancholy criticism of an inconsequent or capricious woman, in relating to Nesta certain observations Priscilla had dropped upon poor faithful Mr. Pempton, because of his concealment from her of his knowledge of things: for this faithful gentleman had been one of the few not ignorant. The rumour was traceable to the City.

"Mother, we walk on planks," Nesta said.

Nataly answered : “ You will grow used to it.”

Her mother’s habitual serenity in martyrdom was deceiving. Nesta had a transient suspicion, that she had grown, from use, to like the whirl of company, for oblivion in the excitement ; and as her remembrance of her own station among the crowding people was a hot flush, the difference of their feelings chilled her.

Nataly said : “ It is to-morrow night again ; we do not rest.” She smiled ; and at once the girl read woman’s armour on the dear face, and asked herself, Could I be so brave ? The question following was a speechless wave, that surged at her father. She tried to fathom the scheme he entertained. The attempt obscured her conception of the man he was. She could not grasp him, being too young for knowing, that young heads cannot obtain a critical hold upon one whom they see grandly succeeding : it is the sun’s brilliance to their eyes.

Mother and daughter slept together that night, and their embrace was their world.

Nesta delighted her father the next day by walking beside him into the City, as far as the end of the Embankment, where the carriage was in waiting with her maid to bring her back; and at his mere ejaculation of a wish, the hardy girl drove down in the afternoon for the walk home with him. Lady Grace Halley was at the office. "I am an incorrigible Stock Exchange gambler," she said.

"Only," Victor bade her beware, "Mines are undulating in movement, and their heights are a preparation for their going down."

She said she "liked a swing."

Nesta looked at them in turn.

The day after and the day after, Lady Grace was present. She made play with Dudley's name.

This coming into the City daily of a girl, for the sake of walking back in winter weather with her father, struck her as ambiguous: either a jealous foolish mother's device, or that of a weak man beating about for protection. — But the woman of the

positive world soon read to the contrary ; helped a little by the man, no doubt. She read rather too much to the contrary, and took the pedestrian girl for perfect simplicity in her tastes, when Nesta had so far grown watchful as to feel relieved by the lady's departure. Her mother, without sympathy for the lady, was too great of soul for jealousy. Victor had his Nataly before him at a hint from Lady Grace : and he went somewhat further than the exact degree when affirming, that Nataly could not scheme, and was incapable of suspecting.—Nataly could perceive things with a certain accuracy : she would not stoop to a meanness.—“ Plot ? Nataly ? ” said he, and shrugged. In fact, the void of plot, drama, shuffle of excitement, reflected upon Nataly. He might have seen as tragic as ever dripped on Stage, had he looked.

But the walk Westward with his girl, together with pride in a daughter who clove her way through all weathers, won his heart to exultation. He told her : “ Fredi does her dada so much good ; ” not telling her in what,

or opening any passage to the mystery of the man he was. She was trying to be a student of life, with her eyes down upon hard earth, despite of her winged young head; she would have compassed him better had he dilated in sublime fashion; but he baffled her perusal of a man of power by the simpleness of his enjoyment of small things coming in his way;—the lighted shops, the crowd, emergence from the crowd, or the meeting near midwinter of a soft warm wind along the Embankment, and dark Thames magnificently coroneted over his grimy flow. There is no grasping of one who quickens us.

His flattery of his girl, too, restored her broken feeling of personal value; it permeated her nourishingly from the natural breath of him that it was.

At times he touched deep in humaneness; and he sat her heart leaping on the flash of a thought to lay it bare, with the secret it held, for his help. That was a dream. She could more easily have uttered the words to Captain Dartrey, after her remembered abashing holy tremour of the vision of doing it

and casting herself on noblest man's compassionateness; and her imagined thousand emotions;—a rolling music within her, a wreath of cloud-glory in her sky;—which had, as with virgins it may be, plighted her body to him for sheer urgency of soul; drawn her by a single unwitting-to-brain, conscious-in-blood, shy curl outward of the sheathing leaf to the flowering of woman to him; even to the shore of that strange sea, where the maid stands choosing this one man for her destiny, as in a trance. So are these young ones unfolded, shade by shade; and a shade is all the difference with them; they can teach the poet to marvel at the immensity of vitality in 'the shadow of a shade.'

Her father shut the glimpse of a possible speaking to him of Mrs. Marsett, with a renewal of his eulogistic allusions to Dudley Sowerby: the "perfect gentleman, good citizen;" prospective heir to an earldom besides. She bowed to Dudley's merits; she read off the honorific pedimental letters of a handsome statue, for a sign to herself that she passed it.

She was unjust, as Victor could feel, though he did not know how coldly unjust. For among the exorbitant requisitions upon their fellow-creatures made by the young, is the demand, that they be definite: no mercy is in them for the transitional. And Dudley—and it was under her influence, and painfully, not ignobly—was in process of development: interesting to philosophers, if not to maidens.

Victor accused her of paying too much heed to Colney Durance's epigrams upon their friends. He quite joined with his English world in its opinion, that epigrams are poor squibs when they do not come out of great guns. Epigrams fired at a venerable nation, are surely the poorest of popgun paper pellets. The English kick at the insolence, when they are not in the mood for pelleting themselves, or when the armed Foreigner is overshadowing and bracing. Colney's pretentious and laboured Satiric Prose Epic of 'THE RIVAL TONGUES,' particularly offended him, as being a clever aim at no hitting; and sustained him, inasmuch as it was an acid friend's collapse. How could Colney expect his

English to tolerate such a spiteful diatribe! The suicide of Dr. Bouthoin at San Francisco was the finishing stroke to the chances of success of the Serial;—although we are promised splendid evolutions on the part of Mr. Semhians; who, after brilliant achievements with bat and ball, abandons those weapons of old England's modern renown, for a determined wrestle with our English pronunciation of words, and rescue of the spelling of them from the printer. His headache over the present treatment of the verb 'To bid,' was a quaint beginning for one who had soon to plead before Japanese, and who acknowledged now "in contrition of spirit," that in formerly opposing the scheme for an Academy, he helped to the handing of our noble language to the rapid reporter of news for an apathetic public. Further, he discovered in astonishment the subordination of all literary Americans to the decrees of their literary authorities; marking a Transatlantic point of departure, and contrasting ominously with the unruly Islanders—"grunting the higgledy-piggledy of their various

ways, in all the porker's gut-gamut at the rush to the trough." After a week's privation of bat and ball, he is, lighted or not, a gas-jet of satire upon his countrymen. As for the 'pathetic sublimity of the Funeral of Dr. Bouthoin,' Victor inveighed against an impious irony in the overdose of the pathos; and the same might be suspected in Britannia's elegy upon him, a strain of hot eulogy throughout. Mr. Semhians, all but treasonably, calls it, Papboat and Brandy:—"our English literary diet of the day:" stimulating and not nourishing. Britannia's mournful anticipation, that '*The shroud enwinding this my son is mine!*'—should the modern generation depart from the track of him who proved himself the giant in mainly supporting her glory—was, no doubt, a high pitch of the note of Conservatism. But considering, that Dr. Bouthoin "committed suicide under a depression of mind produced by a surfeit of unaccustomed dishes, upon a physical system inspired by the traditions of exercise, and no longer relieved by the practice"—to translate from Dr. Gannius:—we are again

at war with the writer's reverential tone, and we know not what to think: except, that Mr. Durance was a Saturday meat-market's butcher in the Satiric Art.

Nesta found it pleasanter to see him than to hear of his work: which, to her present feeling, was inhuman. As little as our native public, had she then any sympathy for the working in the idea: she wanted throbs, visible aims, the Christian incarnate; she would have preferred the tale of slaughter—periodically invading all English classes as a flush from the undrained lower, Vikings all—to frigid sterile Satire. And truly it is not a fruit-bearing rod. Colney had to stand on the defense of it against the damsel's charges. He thought the use of the rod, while expressing profound regret at a difference of opinion between him and those noble heathens, beneficial for boys; but in relation to their seniors, and particularly for old gentlemen, he thought that the sharpest rod to cut the skin was the sole saving of them. Insensibility to Satire, he likened to the hard-mouthed horse; which is doomed to the

worser thing in consequence. And consequently upon the lack of it, and of training to appreciate it, he described his country's male venerables as being distinguishable from annuitant spinsters only in presenting themselves forked.

"He is unsuccessful and embittered," Victor said to Nesta. "Colney will find in the end, that he has lost his game and soured himself by never making concessions. Here's this absurd Serial—it fails, of course; and then he has to say, it's because he won't tickle his English, won't enter into a 'frowzy complicity' with their tastes."

"But—I think of Skepsey—honest creatures respect Mr. Durance, and he is always ready to help them," said Nesta.

"If he can patronize."

"Does he patronize me, dada?"

"You are one of his exceptions. Marry a title and live in state—and then hear him! I am successful, and the result of it is, that he won't acknowledge wisdom in anything I say or do; he will hardly acknowledge the success. It is 'a dirty road to success,'

he says. So that, if successful, I must have rolled myself in mire. I compelled him to admit he was wrong about your being received at Moorsedge: a bit of a triumph!"

Nesta's walks with her father were no loss of her to Nataly; the girl came back to her bearing so fresh and so full a heart; and her father was ever prouder of her: he presented new features of her in his quotations of her sayings, thoughtful sayings. "I declare she helps one to think," he said. "It's not precocity; it's healthy inquiry. She brings me nearer ideas of my own, not yet examined, than any one else does. I say, what a wife for a man!"

"She takes my place beside you, dear, now I am not quite strong," said Nataly. "You have not seen . . .?"

"Dudley Sowerby? He's at Cronidge, I believe. His elder brother's in a bad way. Bad business, this looking to a death."

Nataly's eyes revealed a similar gulf.

Let it be cast on Society, then! A Society opposing Nature forces us to these murderous looks upon impediments. But what of a

Society in the dance with Nature? Victor did not approve of that. He began, under the influence of Nesta's companionship, to see the Goddess Nature there is in a chastened nature. And this view shook the curtain covering his lost Idea. He felt sure he should grasp it soon and enter into its daylight: a muffled voice within him said, that he was kept waiting to do so by the inexplicable tardiness of a certain one to rise ascending to her spiritual roost. She was now harmless to strike: Themison, Carling, Jarniman, even the Rev. Groseman Buttermore, had been won to the cause of humanity. Her ascent, considering her inability to do further harm below, was most mysteriously delayed. Owing to it, in a manner almost as mysterious, he was kept crossing a bridge having a slippery bit on it. Thanks to his gallant Fredi, he had found his feet again. But there was a bruise where, to his honour, he felt tenderest. And Fredi away, he might be down again—for no love of a slippery bit, proved slippery, one might guess, by a predecessor or two. Ta-ta-ta-ta and mum!

Still, in justice to the little woman, she had been serviceable. She would be still more so, if a member of Parliament now on his back—here we are with the murder-eye again !

Nesta's never speaking of Lakelands clouded him a little, as an intimation of her bent of mind.

"And does my girl come to her dada to-day?" he said, on the fifth morning since her return ; prepared with a villanous resignation to hear, that this day she abstained, though he had the wish for her coming.

"Why, don't you know," said she, "we all meet to have tea in Mr. Durance's chambers ; and I walk back with you, and there we are joined by mama ; and we are to have a feast of literary celebrities."

"Colney's selection of them ! And Simeon Fenellan, I hope. Perhaps Dartrey. Perhaps . . . eh?"

She reddened. So Dudley Sowerby's unspoken name could bring the blush to her cheeks. Dudley had his excuses in his brother's condition. His father's health,

too, was—but this was Dudley calculating. Where there are coronets, calculations of this sort must needs occur; just as where there are complications. Odd, one fancies it, that we walking along the pavement of civilized life, should be perpetually summoning Orcus to our aid, for the sake of getting a clear course.

“And supposing a fog, my dearie?” he said.

“The daughter in search of her father carries a lamp to light her to him through densest fogs as well as over deserts,” &c. She declaimed a long sentence, to set the ripple running in his features; and when he left the room for a last word with Armandine, she flung arms round her mother’s neck, murmuring: Mother! mother!” a cry equal to “I am sure I do right,” and understood so by Nataly approving it; she too on the line of her instinct, without an object in sight.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MOTHER—THE DAUGHTER.

TAKING Nesta's hand, on her entry into his chambers with her father, Colney Durance bowed over it and kissed it. The unusual performance had a meaning; she felt she was praised. It might be because she made herself her father's companion. "I can't persuade him to put on a great-coat," she said. "You would defeat his aim at the particular waistcoat of his ambition," said Colney, goaded to speak, not anxious to be heard.

He kept her beside him, leading her about for introductions to multiform celebrities of both sexes; among them the gentleman editing the Magazine which gave out serially THE RIVAL TONGUES: and there was talk of a dragon-throated public's queer appetite in

Letters. The pained Editor deferentially smiled at her cheerful mention of Delphica. "In book form, perhaps!" he remarked, with plaintive resignation; adding: "You read it?" And a lady exclaimed: "We all read it!"

But we are the elect, who see signification and catch flavour; and we are reminded of an insatiable monster how sometimes capricious is his gorge. "He may happen to be in the humour for a shaking!" Colney's poor consolation it was to say of the prospects of his published book: for the funny monster has been known to like a shaking.

"He takes it kinder tickled," said Fenellan, joining the group and grasping Nesta's hand with a warmth that thrilled her and set her guessing. "A taste of his favourite Cayenne lollypop, Colney; it fetches the tear he loves to shed, or it gives him digestive heat in the bag of his literary receptacle—fearfully relaxed and enormous! And no wonder; his notion of the attitude for reading, is to lie him down on his back; and he has in a jiffy the funnel of the Libraries inserted into his

mouth, and he feels the publishers pouring their gallons through it unlimitedly; never crying out, which he can't; only swelling, which he's obliged to do, with a non-nutritious inflation; and that's his intellectual enjoyment; bearing a likeness to the horrible old torture of the *baillir d'eau*; and he's doomed to perish in the worst book-form of dropsy. You, my dear Colney, have offended his police or excise, who stand by the funnel, in touch with his palate, to make sure that nothing above proof is poured in; and there's your misfortune. He's not half a bad fellow, you find when you haven't got to serve him."

"Superior to his official parasites, one supposes!" Colney murmured.

The celebrities were unaffectedly interested in a literary failure having certain merits; they discussed it, to compliment the crownless author; and the fervider they, the more was he endowed to read the meanness prompting the generosity. Publication of a book, is the philosopher's lantern upon one's fellows.

Colney was caught away from his private manufactory of acids by hearing Simeon

Fenellan relate to Victor some of the recent occurrences at Brighton. Simeon's tone was unsatisfying; Colney would have the word; he was like steel on the grindstone for such a theme of our national grotesque-sublime.

“That Demerara Supple-jack, Victor! Don't listen to Simeon; he's a man of lean narrative, fit to chronicle political party wrangles and such-like crop of carcase prose: this is epical. In DRINK we have Old England's organic Epic; Greeks and Trojans; Parliamentary Olympus, ennobled brewers, nasal fanatics, all the machinery to hand. Keep a straight eye on the primary motives of man, you'll own the English produce the material for proud verse; they're alive there! Dartrey's Demerara makes a pretty episode of the battle. I haven't seen it—if it's possible to look on it: but I hear it is flexible, of a vulgar appearance in repose, Jove's lightning at one time, the thong of Æacus at another. Observe Dartrey marching off to the Station, for the purpose of laying his miraculous weapon across the shoulders of a son of Mars, who had offended. But we have his name,

my dear Victor ! His name, Simeon ?—Worrell ; a Major Worrell : his offence being probably, that he obtained military instruction in the Service, and left it at his convenience, for our poor patch and tatter British Army to take in his place another young student, who'll grow up to do similarly. And Dartrey, we assume, is off to stop that system. You behold Sir Dartrey twirling the weapon in preparatory fashion ; because he is determined we shall have an army of trained officers instead of infant amateurs heading heroic louts. Not a thought of Beer in Dartrey !—always unpatriotic, you'll say. Plato entreats his absent mistress to fix eyes on a star : eyes on Beer for the uniting of you English ! I tell you no poetic fiction. Seeing him on his way, thus terribly armed, and knowing his intent, Venus, to shield a former favourite servant of Mars, conjured the most diverting of interventions, in the shape of a young woman in a poke-bonnet, and Skepsey her squire, marching with a dozen or so, informing bedevilled mankind of the hideousness of our hymnification when it

is not under secluding sanction of the Edifice, and challenging criticism ; and that was hard by, and real English, in the form of bludgeons, wielded by a battalion of the national idol Bungay Beervat's boys ; and they fell upon the hymners. Here you fill in with pastoral similes. They struck the maid adored by Skepsey. And that was the blow which slew them ! Our little man drove into the press with a pair of fists able to do their work. A valiant skiff upon a sea of enemies, he was having it on the nob, and suddenly the Demerara lightened. It flailed to thresh. Enough to say, brains would have come. The Bungays made a show of fight. No lack of blood in them, to stock a raw shilling's worth or gush before Achilles raging. You perceive the picture, you can almost sing the ballad. We want only a few names of the fallen. It was the carving of a *maître chef*, according to Skepsey : right—left—and point, with supreme precision : they fell, accurately sliced from the joint. Having done with them, Dartrey tossed the Demerara to Skepsey, and washed his hands of battle ; and he let

his major go unscathed. Phlebotomy sufficient for the day!"

Nesta's ears hummed with the name of Major Worrell.

"Skepsey did come back to London with a rather damaged frontispiece," Victor said. "He can't have joined those people?"

"They may suit one of your militant peace-makers," interposed Fenellan. "The most placable creatures alive, and the surest for getting-up a shindy."

"Suit him! They're the scandal of our streets." Victor was pricked with a jealousy of them for beguiling him of his trusty servant.

"Look at your country, see where it shows its vitality," said Colney. "You don't see elsewhere any vein in movement—movement," he harped on the word Victor constantly employed to express the thing he wanted to see. "Think of that, when the procession sets your teeth on edge. They're honest foes of vice, and they move:—in England! Pulpit-preaching has no effect. *For gross maladies, gross remedies.* You may

judge of what you are by the quality of the cure. Puritanism, I won't attempt to paint—it would barely be decent; but compare it with the spectacle of English frivolity, and you'll admit it to be the best show you make. It may still be the saving of you—on the level of the orderly ox: I've not observed that it aims at higher.—And talking of the pulpit, Barmby is off to the East, has accepted a Shoreditch curacy, Skepsey tells me."

"So there's the reason for our not seeing him!" Victor turned to Nesta.

"Papa, you won't be angry with Skepsey if he has joined those people," said Nesta. "I'm sure he thinks of serving his country, Mr. Durance."

Colney smiled on her. "And you too?"

"If women knew how!"

"They're hitting on more ways at present than the men—in England."

"But, Mr. Durance, it speaks well for England when they're allowed the chance here."

"Good!" Fenellan exclaimed. "And that upsets his placement of the modern national

genders : Germany masculine, France feminine, Old England what remains.”

Victor ruffled and reddened on his shout of “Neuter?”

Their circle widened. Nesta knew she was on promotion, by her being led about and introduced to ladies. They were encouraging with her. One of them, a Mrs. Marina Floyer, had recently raised a standard of feminine insurrection. She said : “I hear your praises from Mr. Durance. He rarely praises. You have shown capacity to meditate on the condition of women, he says.”

Nesta drew a shorter breath, with a hope at heart. She speculated in the dark, as to whether her aim to serve and help was not so friendless. And did Mr. Durance approve? But surely she stood in a glorious England if there were men and women to welcome a girl to their councils. Oh! that is the broad free England where gentlemen and gentlewomen accept of the meanest aid to cleanse the land of its iniquities, and do not suffer shame to smite a young face for touching upon horrors with a pure design.

She cried in her bosom : I feel ! She had no other expression for that which is as near as great natures may come to the conceiving of the celestial spirit from an emissary angel ; and she trembled, the fire ran through her. It seemed to her, that she would be called to help or that certainly they were nearing to an effacement of the woofullest of evils ; and if not helping, it would still be a blessedness for her to kneel thanking heaven.

Society was being attacked and defended. She could but studiously listen. Her father was listening. The assailant was a lady ; and she had a hearing, although she treated Society as a discrowned monarch on trial for an offence against a more precious : viz., the individual cramped by brutish laws : the individual with the ideas of our time, righteously claiming expansion out of the clutches of a narrow old-world disciplinarian—that giant hypocrite ! She flung the gauntlet at externally venerable Institutions ; and she had a hearing, where horri-fication, execration, the foul Furies of Conservatism would in a shortly antecedent day

have been hissing and snakily lashing, hounding her to expulsion. Mrs. Marina Floyer gravely seconded her. Colney did the same. Victor turned sharp on him. "Yes," Colney said; "we unfold the standard of extremes in this country, to get a single step taken: that's how we move: we threaten death to get footway. Now, mark: Society's errors will be admitted."

A gentleman spoke. He began by admitting Society's errors. Nevertheless, it so distinctly exists for the common good, that we may say of Society in relation to the individual, it is the body to the soul. We may wash, trim, purify, but we must not maim it. The assertion of our individuality in opposition to the Government of Society—this existing Society—is a toss of the cap for the erasure of our civilization, et cætera.

Platitudes can be of intense interest if they approach our case.—But, if you please, we ask permission to wash, trim, purify, and we do not get it.—But you have it!—Because we take it at our peril; and you, who are too cowardly to grant or withhold, call-up the

revolutionary from the pits by your slackness:—&c. There was a pretty hot debate. Both assailant and defendant, to Victor's thinking, spoke well, and each the right thing: and he could have made use of both, but he could answer neither. He beat about for the cause of this deficiency, and discovered it in his position. Mentally, he was on the side of Society. Yet he was annoyed to find the attack was so easily answerable when the defense unfolded. But it was absurd to expect it would not be. And in fact, a position secretly rebellious is equal to water on the brain for stultifying us.

Before the controversy was over, a note in Nataly's handwriting called him home. She wrote: "Make my excuses. C. D. will give Nesta and some lady dinner. A visitor here. Come alone, and without delay. Quite well, robust. Impatient to consult with you, nothing else."

Nesta was happy to stay; and Victor set forth.

The visitor? plainly Dudley. Nataly's trusting the girl to the chance of some lady

being present, was unlike her. Dudley might be tugging at the cord; and the recent conversation upon Society, rendered one of its gilt pillars particularly estimable.—A person in the debate had declared this modern protest on behalf of individualism to represent Society's Criminal Trial. And it is likely to be a long one. And good for the world, that we see such a Trial!—Well said or not, undoubtedly Society is an old criminal: not much more advanced than the state of spiritual worship where bloody sacrifice was offered to a hungry Lord. But it has a case for pleading. We may liken it, as we have it now, to the bumping lumberer's raft; suitable along torrent waters until we come to smoother. Are we not on waters of a certain smoothness at the reflecting level?—enough to justify demands for a vessel of finer design. If Society is to subsist, it must have the human with the logical argument against the cry of the free-flags, instead of presenting a block's obtuseness. That, you need not hesitate to believe, will be rolled downward and disintegrated, sooner than later. A Society based

on the logical concrete of humane considerateness:—a Society prohibiting to Mrs. Burman her wielding of a life-long rod. . . .

The personal element again to confuse inquiry!—And Skepsey and Barmby both of them bent on doing work without inquiry of any sort! They were enviable: they were good fellows. Victor clung to the theme because it hinted of next door to his lost Idea. He rubbed the back of his head, fancying a throb there.—Are civilized creatures incapable of abstract thought when their social position is dubious? For if so, we never can be quit of those we forsake.—Apparently Mrs. Burman's unfathomed power lay in her compelling him to summon the devilish in himself and play upon the impish in Society, that he might overcome her.

Victor's house-door stopped this current.

Nataly took his embrace.

“Nothing wrong?” he said, and saw the something. It was a favourable moment to tell her what she might not at another time regard as a small affair. “News in the City to-day of that South London borough being

vacated. Quatley urges me. A death again! I saw Pempton, too. Will you credit me when I tell you he carries his infatuation so far, that he has been investing in Japanese and Chinese Loans, because they are less meat-eaters than others, and vegetarians are more stable, and outlast us all!—Dudley the visitor?”

“Mr. Sowerby has been here,” she said, in a shaking low voice.

Victor held her hand and felt a squeeze more nervous than affectionate.

“To consult with me,” she added. “My maid will go at ten to bring Nesta; Mr. Durance I can count on, to see her safe home. Ah!” she wailed.

Victor nodded, saying: “I guess. And, my love, you will receive Mrs. John Cormyn to-morrow morning. I can’t endure gaps. Gaps in our circle must never be. Do I guess?—I spoke to Colney about bringing her home.”

Nataly sighed: “Ah! make what provision we will! Evil—— Mr. Sowerby has had a great deal to bear.”

“A worldling may think so.”

Her breast heaved, and the wave burst but her restraining of tears froze her speech.

“Victor! Our Nesta! Mr. Sowerby is unable to explain. And how the Miss Duvidneys! . . . At that Brighton!”—The voice he heard was not his darling’s deep rich note, it had dropped to toneless hoarseness: “She has been permitted to make acquaintance—she has been seen riding with—she has called upon— Oh! it is one of those abandoned women. In her house! Our girl! Our Nesta! She was insulted by a man in the woman’s house. She is talked of over Brighton. The mother!—the daughter! And grant me this—that never was girl more carefully . . . never till she was taken from me. Oh! do not forget. You will defend me? You will say, that her mother did with all her soul strive . . . It is not a rumour. Mr. Sowerby has had it confirmed.” A sob caught her voice.

Victor’s hands caressed to console: “Dudley does not propose to . . .?”

“Nesta must promise . . . But how it

happened? How! An acquaintance with—contact with!—Oh! cruel!” Each time she ceased speaking, the wrinkles of a shiver went over her, and the tone was of tears coming, but she locked them in.

“An accident!” said Victor; “some misunderstanding—there can’t be harm. Of course, she promises—hasn’t to promise. How could a girl distinguish! He does not cast blame on her?”

“Dear, if you would go down to Dartrey to-morrow. He knows:—it is over the Clubs there; he will tell you, before a word to Nesta. Innocent, yes! Mr. Sowerby has not to be assured of that. Ignorant of the character of the dreadful woman? Ah, if I could ever in anything think her ignorant! She frightens me. Mr. Sowerby is indulgent. He does me justice. My duty to her—I must defend myself—has been my first thought. I said in my prayers—she at least! . . . We have to see the more than common reasons why she, of all girls, should—he did not hint it, he was delicate; her name must not be public.”

“Yes, yes, Dudley is without parallel as a gentleman,” said Victor. “It does not suit me to hear the word ‘indulgent.’ My dear, if you were down there, you would discover, that the talk was the talk of two or three men seeing our girl ride by—and she did ride with a troop: why, we’ve watched them along the parade, often. Clear as day how it happened! I’ll go down early to-morrow.”

He fancied Nataly was appeased. And even out of this annoyance, there was the gain of her being won to favour Dudley’s hitherto but tolerated suit.

Nataly also had the fancy, that the calm following on her anguish, was a moderation of it. She was kept strung to confide in her girl by the recent indebtedness to her for words heavenly in the strengthening comfort they gave. But no sooner was she alone than her torturing perplexities and her abasement of the hours previous to Victor’s coming returned.

For a girl of Nesta’s head could not be deceived; she had come home with a woman’s intelligence of the world, hard knowledge

of it—a knowledge drawn from foul wells, the unhappy mother imagined: she dreaded to probe to the depth of it. She had in her wounded breast the world's idea, that corruption must come of the contact with impurity.

Nataly renewed her cry of despair: "The mother!—the daughter!"—her sole revelation of the heart's hollows in her stammered speaking to Victor.

She thanked heaven for the loneliness of her bed, where she could repeat: "The mother!—the daughter!" hearing the world's words:—the daughter excused, by reason of her having such a mother; the mother unpitied for the bruited of her brazen daughter's name; but both alike consigned to the corners of the world's dust-heaps. She cried out, that her pride was broken. Her pride, her last support of life, had gone to pieces. The tears she restrained in Victor's presence, were called on to come now, and she had none. It might be, that she had not strength for weeping. She was very weak. Rising from bed to lock her door against Nesta's entry to the

room on her return at night, she could hardly stand: a chill and a clouding overcame her. The quitted bed seemed the haven of a drifted wreck to reach.

Victor tried the handle of a locked door in the dark of the early winter morning. "The mother!—the daughter!" had swung a pendulum for some time during the night in him, too. He would rather have been subjected to the spectacle of tears than have heard that toneless voice, as it were the dry torrent-bed rolling blocks instead of melodious, if afflicting, waters.

He told Nesta not to disturb her mother, and murmured of a headache: "Though, upon my word, the best cure for mama would be a look into Fredi's eyes!" he said, embracing his girl, quite believing in her, just a little afraid of her.

CHAPTER X.

NATALY, NESTA, AND DARTREY FENELLAN.

PLEASANT things, that come to us too late for our savour of the sweetness in them, toll ominously of life on the last walk to its end. Yesterday, before Dudley Sowerby's visit, Nataly would have been stirred where the tears we shed for happiness or repress at a flattery dwell when seeing her friend Mrs. John Cormyn enter her boudoir and hearing her speak repentantly, most tenderly. Mrs. John said: "You will believe I have suffered, dear; I am half my weight, I do think:" and she did not set the smile of responsive humour moving; although these two ladies had a key of laughter between them. Nataly took her kiss; held her hand, and at the parting kissed her. She would rather have

seen her friend than not : so far she differed from a corpse ; but she was near the likeness to the dead in the insensibility to any change of light shining on one who best loved darkness and silence. She cried to herself wilfully, that her pride was broken : as women do when they spurn at the wounding of a dignity they cannot protect and die to see bleeding ; for in it they live.

The cry came of her pride unbroken, sore bruised, and after a certain space for recovery combative. She said : Any expiation I could offer where I did injury, I would not refuse ; I would humble myself and bless heaven for being able to pay my debt—what I can of it. All I contend against is, injustice. And she sank into sensational protests of her anxious care of her daughter, too proud to phrase them.

Her one great affliction, the scourging affliction of her utter loneliness ;—an outcast from her family ; daily, and she knew not how, more shut away from the man she loved ; now shut away from her girl ;—seemed under the hand of the angel of God. The

abandonment of her by friends, was merely the light to show it.

Midday's post brought her a letter from Priscilla Graves, entreating to be allowed to call on her next day.—We are not so easily cast off! Nataly said, bitterly, in relation to the lady whose offending had not been so great. She wrote: "Come, if sure that you sincerely wish to."

Having fasted, she ate at lunch in her dressing-room, with some taste of the food, haunted by an accusation of gluttony because of her eating at all, and a vile confession, that she was enabled to eat, owing to the receipt of Priscilla's empty letter: for her soul's desire was to be doing a deed of expiation, and the macerated flesh seemed her assurance to herself of the courage to make amends.—I must have some strength, she said wearily, in apology for the morsel consumed.

Nesta's being in the house with her, became an excessive irritation. Doubts of the girl's possible honesty to speak a reptile truth under question; amazement at her boldness

to speak it; hatred of the mouth that could: and loathing of the words, the theme; and abomination of herself for conjuring fictitious images to rouse real emotions; all ran counterthreads, that produced a mad pattern in the mind, affrighting to reason: and then, for its preservation, reason took a superrational leap, and ascribed the terrible injustice of this last cruel stroke to the divine scourge, recognized divine by the selection of the mortal spot for chastisement. She clasped her breast, and said: It is mortal. And that calmed her.

She said, smiling: I never felt my sin until this blow came! Therefore the blow was proved divine. Ought it not to be welcomed?—and she appearing no better than one of those, the leprous of the sex! And brought to that acknowledgement of the likeness by her daughter!

Nataly drank the poison distilled from her exclamations and was ice. She had denied herself to Nesta's redoubled petition. Nesta knocking at the door a third time and calling, tore the mother two ways: to have her girl

on her breast or snap their union in a word with an edge. She heard the voice of Dartrey Fenellan.

He was admitted. "No, dear," she said to Nesta; and Nesta's, "My own mother," consentingly said, in tender resignation, as she retired, sprang a stinging tear to the mother's eyelids.

Dartrey looked at the door closing on the girl.

"Is it a very low woman?" Nataly asked him in a Church whisper, with a face abashed.

"It is not," said he, quick to meet any abruptness.

"She must be cunning."

"In the ordinary way. We say it of Puss before the hounds."

"To deceive a girl like Nesta!"

"She has done no harm."

"Dartrey, you speak to a mother. You have seen the woman? She is?—ah!"

"She is womanly, womanly."

"Quite one of those . . . ?"

"My dear soul! You can't shake them off in that way. She is one of *us*. If we have

the class, we can't escape from it. They are not to bear all the burden because they exist. We are the bigger debtors. I tell you she is womanly."

"It sounds like horrid cynicism."

"Friends of mine would abuse it for the reverse."

"Do not make me hate your chivalry. This woman is a rod on my back. Provided only she has not dropped venom into Nesta's mind!"

"Don't fear!"

"Can you tell me you think she has done no harm to my girl?"

"To Nesta herself?—not any: not to a girl like your girl."

"To my girl's name? Speak at once. But I know she has. She induced Nesta to go to her house. My girl was insulted in this woman's house."

Dartrey's forehead ridged with his old fury and a gust of present contempt. "I can tell you this, that the fellow who would think harm of it, knowing the facts, is not worthy of touching the tips of the fingers of your girl."

“She is talked of!”

“A good-looking girl out riding with a handsome woman on a parade of idlers!”

“The woman is notorious.” Nataly said it shivering.

He shook his head. “Not true.”

“She has an air of a lady?”

“She sits a horse well.”

“Would she to any extent deceive me—impose on me here?”

“No.”

“Ah!” Nataly moaned.

“But what?” said Dartrey. “There was no pretence. Her style is not worse than that of some we have seen. There was no effort to deceive. The woman’s plain for you and me to read, she was few of the arts; one or two tricks, if you like: and these were not needed for use. There are women who have them, and have not been driven or let slip into the wilderness.”

“Yes; I know!—those ideas of yours!” Nataly had once admired him for his knightliness toward the weakest women and the women underfoot. “You have spoken to this

woman? She boasted of acquaintance with Nesta?"

"She thanked God for having met her."

"Is it one of the hysterical creatures?"

Mrs. Marsett appeared fronting Dartrey.

He laughed to himself. "A clever question. There is a leaning to excitement of manner at times. It's not hysteria. Allow for her position."

Nataly took the unintended blow, and bowed to it; and still more harshly said: "What rank of life does the woman come from?"

"The class educated for a skittish career by your popular Stage and your Book-stalls. I am not precise?"

"Leave Mr. Durance. Is she in any degree commonly well-bred? . . . behaviour, talk—her English."

"I trench on Mr. Durance in replying. Her English is passable. You may hear . . ."

"Everywhere, of course! And this woman of slipshod English and excited manners imposed upon Nesta!"

"It would not be my opinion."

“Did *not* impose on her!”

“Not many would impose on Nesta Radnor for long.”

“Think what that says, Dartrey!”

“You have had a detestable version of the story.”

“Because an excited creature thanks God to you for having met her!”

“She may. She’s a better woman for having met her. Don’t suppose we’re for supernatural conversions. The woman makes no show of that. But she has found a good soul among her sex—her better self in youth, as one guesses; and she is grateful—feels farther from exile in consequence. She has found a *lady* to take her by the hand!—not a common case. She can never go to the utterly bad after knowing Nesta. I forget if she says it; I say it. You have heard the story from one of your conventional gentlemen.”

“A true gentleman. I have reason to thank him. He has not your ideas on these matters, Dartrey. He is very sensitive . . . on Nesta’s behalf.

“ With reference to marriage. I’ll own I prefer another kind of gentleman. I’ve had my experience of that kind of gentleman. Many of the kind have added their spot to the outcasts abominated for uncleanness—in holy unction. Many?—I won’t say all; but men who consent to hear black words pitched at them, and help to set good women facing away from them, are pious dolts or rascal dogs of hypocrites. They, if you’ll let me quote Colney Durance to you to-day—and how is it he is not in favour?—they are tempting the Lord to turn the pillars of Society into pillars of salt. Down comes the house. And priests can rest in sight of it!—They ought to be dead against the sanctimony that believes it excommunicates when it curses. The relationship is not dissolved so cheaply, though our Society affects to think it is. Barmby’s off to the East End of this London, Victor informs me :—good fellow! And there he’ll be groaning over our vicious nature. Nature is not more responsible for vice than she is for inhumanity. Both bad, but the latter’s the worse of the two.”

Nataly interposed: "I see the contrast, and see whom it's to strike."

Dartrey sent a thought after his meaning. "Hardly that. Let it stand. He's only one with the world: but he shares the criminal infamy for crushing hope out of its frailest victims. They're that—no sentiment. What a world, too, look behind it!—brutal because brutish. The world may go hang: we expect more of your gentleman. To hear of Nesta down there, and doubt that she was about good work;—and come complaining! He had the privilege of speaking to her, remonstrating, if he wished. There are men who think—men!—the plucking of sinners out of the mire a dirty business. They depute it to certain officials. And your women—it's the taste of the world to have them educated so, that they can as little take the humane as the enlightened view. Except, by the way, sometimes, in secret;—they have a sisterly breast. In secret, they do occasionally think as they feel. In public, the brass mask of the Idol they call Propriety commands or supplies their feelings and

thoughts. I won't repeat my reasons for educating them differently. At present we have but half the woman to go through life with—and thank you."

Dartrey stopped. "Don't be disturbed," he added. "There's no ground for alarm. Not of any sort."

Nataly said: "What name?"

"Her name is Mrs. Marsett."

"The name is . . .?"

"Captain Marsett: will be Sir Edward. He came back from the Continent yesterday."

A fit of shuddering seized Nataly. It grew in violence, and speaking out of it, with a pause of sickly empty chatter of the jaws, she said: "Always that name?"

"Before the maiden name? May have been or not."

"Not, you say?"

"I don't accurately know."

Dartrey sprang to his legs. "My dear soul! dear friend—one of the best! if we go on fencing in the dark, there'll be wounds. Your way of taking this affair disappointed

me. Now I understand. It's the disease of a trouble, to fly at comparisons. No real one exists. I wished to protect the woman from a happier sister's judgement, to save you from alarm concerning Nesta:—quite groundless, if you'll believe me. Come, there's plenty of benevolent writing abroad on these topics now: facts are more looked at, and a good woman may join us in taking them without the horrors and loathings of angels rather too much given to claim distinction from the luckless. A girl who's unprotected may go through adventures before she fixes, and be a creature of honest intentions. Better if protected, we all agree. Better also if the world did not favour the girl's multitude of enemies. Your system of not dealing with facts openly is every way favourable to them. I am glad to say, Victor recognizes what corruption that spread of wealth is accountable for. And now I must go and have a talk with the—what a change from the blue butterfly! Eaglet, I ought to have said. I dine with you, for Victor may bring news."

“Would anything down there be news to you, Dartrey?”

“He makes it wherever he steps.”

“He would reproach me for not detaining you. Tell Nesta I have to lie down after talking. She has a child’s confidence in you.”

A man of middle age! he said to himself. It is the particular ejaculation which tames the senior whose heart is for a dash of holiday. He resolved, that the mother might trust to the discretion of a man of his age; and he went down to Nesta, grave with the weight his count of years should give him. Seeing her, the light of what he now knew of her was an ennobling equal to celestial. For this fair girl was one of the active souls of the world—his dream to discover in woman’s form. She, the little Nesta, the tall pure-eyed girl before him, was, young though she was, already in the fight with evil: a volunteer of the army of the simply Christian. The worse for it? Sowerby would think so. She was not of the order of young women who, in sheer ignorance or in voluntary, consent to the peace with evil, and are kept

externally safe from the smirch of evil, and are the ornaments of their country, glory of a country prizing ornaments higher than qualities.

Dartrey could have been momentarily incredulous of things revealed by Mrs. Marsett—not incredulous of the girl's heroism : that capacity he caught and gauged in her shape of head, cut of mouth, and the measurements he was accustomed to make at a glance :—but her beauty, or the form of beauty which was hers, argued against her having set foot of thought in our fens. Here and far there we meet a young saint vowed to service along by those dismal swamps : and saintly she looks ; not of this earth. Nesta was of the blooming earth. Where do we meet girl or woman comparable to garden-flowers, who can dare to touch to lift the spotted of her sex ? He was puzzled by Nesta's unlikeness in deeds and in aspect. He remembered her eyes, on the day when he and Colonel Sudley beheld her ; presently he was at quiet grapple with her mind. His doubts cleared off. Then the question came, How could a girl

of heroical character be attached to the man Sowerby? That entirely passed belief.

And was it possible his wishes beguiled his hearing? Her tones were singularly vibrating.

They talked for a while before, drawing a deep breath, she said: "I fancy I am in disgrace with my mother."

"You have a suspicion why?" said he.

"I have."

She would have told him why: the words were at her lips. Previous to her emotion on the journey home, the words would have come out. They were arrested by the thunder of the knowledge, that the nobleness in him drawing her to be able to speak of scarlet matter, was personally worshipped.

He attributed the full rose upon her cheeks to the forbidding subject.

To spare pain, he said: "No misunderstanding with the dear mother will last the day through. Can I help?"

"Oh, Captain Dartrey!"

"Drop the captain. Dartrey will do."

"How could I!"

“You’re not wanting in courage, Nesta.”

“Hardly for that!”

“By-and-by, then.”

“Though I could not say *Mr.* Fenellan.”

“You see; Dartrey, it must be.”

“If I could!”

“But the fellow is not a captain; and he is a friend, an old friend, very old friend: he’ll be tipped with grey in a year or two.”

“I might be bolder then.”

“Imagine it now. There is no disloyalty in your calling your friends by their names.”

Her nature rang to the implication. “I am not bound.”

Dartrey hung fast, speculating on her visibly: “I heard you were.”

“No. I must be free.”

“It is not an engagement?”

“Will you laugh?—I have never quite known. My father desired it: and my desire is to please him. I think I am vain enough to think I read through blinds and shutters. The engagement—what there was—has been, to my reading, broken more than once. I

have not considered it, to settle my thoughts on it, until lately : and now I may suspect it to be broken. I have given cause—if it is known. There is no blame elsewhere. I am not unhappy, Captain Dartrey.”

“Captain by courtesy. Very well. Tell me how Nesta judges the engagement to be broken?”

She was mentally phrasing before she said :
“Absence.”

“He was here yesterday.”

All that the visit embraced was in her expressive look, as of sight drawing inward, like our breath in a spell of wonderment. “Then I understand ; it enlightens me. My own mother!—my poor mother! he should have come to me. I was the guilty person, not she ; and she is the sufferer. That, if in life were direct retribution!—but the very meaning of having a heart, is to suffer through others or for them.”

“You have soon seen that, dear girl,” said Dartrey.

“So, my own mother, and loving me as she does, blames me!” Nesta sighed ; she

took a sharp breath. "You? do you blame me too?"

He pressed her hand, enamoured of her instantaneous divination and heavenly candour.

But he was admonished, that to speak high approval would not be honourable advantage taken of the rival condemning; and he said: "Blame? Some think it is not always the right thing to do the right thing. I've made mistakes, with no bad design. A good mother's view is not often wrong."

"You pressed my hand," she murmured.

That certainly had said more.

"Glad to again," he responded. It was uttered airily and was meant to be as lightly done.

Nesta did not draw back her hand. "I feel strong when you press it." Her voice wavered, and as when we hear a flask sing thin at the filling, ceased upon evidence of a heart surcharged. How was he to relax the pressure!—he had to give her the strength she craved: and he vowed it should be but for half a minute, half a minute longer.

Her tears fell; she eyed him steadily; she had the look of sunlight in shower.

“Oldish men are the best friends for you, I suppose,” he said; and her gaze turned elusive phrases to vapour.

He was compelled to see the fiery core of the raincloud lighting it for a revealment, that allowed as little as it retained of a shadow of obscurity.

The sight was keener than touch and the run of blood with blood to quicken slumbering seeds of passion.

But here is the place of broken ground and tangle, which calls to honourable men, not bent on sport, to be wary to guard the gunlock. He stopped the word at his mouth. It was not in him to stop or moderate the force of his eyes. She met them with the slender unbendingness that was her own; a feminine of inspired manhood. There was no soft expression, only the direct shot of light, on both sides; conveying as much as is borne from sun to earth, from earth to sun. And when such an exchange has come between the two, they are past plighting, they are the wedded one.

Nesta felt it, without asking whether she was loved. She was his. She had not a thought of the word of love or the being beloved. Showers of painful blissfulness went through her, as the tremours of a shocked frame, while she sat quietly, showing scarce a sign; and after he had let her hand go, she had the pressure on it. The quivering intense of the moment of his eyes and grasp was lord of her, lord of the day and of all days coming. That is how Love slays Death. Never did girl so give her soul.

She would have been the last to yield it unreservedly to a man untrusted for the character she worshipped. But she could have given it to Dartrey, despite his love of another, because it was her soul, without any of the cravings, except to bestow.

He perceived, that he had been carried on for the number of steps which are countless miles and do not permit the retreat across the desert behind; and he was in some amazement at himself, remindful of the different nature of our restraining power when we have a couple playing on it. Yet

here was this girl, who called him up to the heights of young life again: and a brave girl; and she bled for the weak, had no shrinking from the women underfoot: for the reason, that she was a girl sovereignly pure, angelically tender. Was there a point of honour to hold him back?

Nataly entered the room. She kissed Nesta, and sat silent.

“Mother, will you speak of me to him, if I go out?” Nesta said.

“We have spoken,” her mother replied, vexed by the unmaidenly allusion to that theme.

She would have asked, How did you guess I knew of it?—but that the, Why should I speak of you to him?—struck the louder note in her bosom: and then, What is there that this girl cannot guess!—filled the mother’s heart with apprehensive dread: and an inward cry, What things will she not set going, to have them discussed! and the appalling theme, sitting offensive though draped in their midst, was taken for a proof of the girl’s unblushingness. After standing as one

woman against the world so long, Nataly was relieved to be on the side of a world now convictedly unjust to her in the confounding of her with the shameless. Her mind had taken the brand of that thought :—And Nesta had brought her to it :—And Dudley Sowerby, a generous representative of the world, had kindly, having the deputed power to do so, sustained her, only partially blaming Nesta, not casting them off ; as the world, with which Nataly felt, under a sense of the protection calling up all her gratitude to young Dudley, would have approved his doing.

She was passing through a fit of the cowardice peculiar to the tediously strained, who are being more than commonly tried—persecuted, as they say when they are not supplicating their tyrannical Authority for aid. The world will continue to be indifferent to their view of it and behaviour toward it until it ceases to encourage the growth of hypocrites.

These are moments when the faces we are observing drop their charm, showing us our perversion internal, if we could but reflect ;

to see it. Very many thousand times above Dudley Sowerby, Nataly ranked Dartrey Fenellan; and still she looked at him, where he sat beside Nesta, ungenially, critical of the very features, jealously in the interests of Dudley; and recollecting, too, that she had once prayed for one exactly resembling Dartrey Fenellan to be her Nesta's husband. But, as she would have said, that was before the indiscretion of her girl had shown her to require for her husband a man whose character and station guaranteed protection instead of inciting to rebellion. And Dartrey, the loved and prized, was often in the rebel ranks; he was dissatisfied with matters as they are; was restless for action, angry with a country denying it to him; he made enemies, he would surely bring down inquiries about Nesta's head, and cause the forgotten or quiescent to be stirred; he would scarcely be the needed hand for such a quiver of the lightnings as Nesta was.

Dartrey read Nataly's brows. This unwonted uncomeliness of hers was an indication to one or other of our dusky pits, not a revealing.

CHAPTER XI.

A CHAPTER IN THE SHADOW OF MRS.

MARSETT.

HE read her more closely when Arlington brought in the brown paper envelope of the wires—to which the mate of Victor ought to have become accustomed. She took it; her eyelids closed, and her features were driven to whiteness. “Only these telegrams,” she said, in apology.

“Lakelands on fire?” Dartrey murmured to Nesta; and she answered: “I should not be sorry.”

Nataly coldly asked her why she would not be sorry.

Dartrey interposed: “I’m sure she thinks Lakelands worries her mother.”

"That ranks low among the worries, Nataly sighed, opening the envelope.

Nesta touched her arm: "Mother! even before Captain Dartrey, if you will let me!"—she turned to him:—"before" . . . at the end of her breath she said: "Dartrey Fenellan. You shall see my whole heart, mother."

Her mother looked from her at him.

"Victor returns by the last train. He telegraphs, that he dines with——" She handed the paper to Dartrey.

"Marsett," he read aloud; and she flushed; she was angry with him for not knowing, that the name was a term of opprobrium flung at her.

"It's to tell you he has done what he thought good," said Dartrey. "In other words, as I interpret, he has completed his daughter's work. So we won't talk about it till he comes. You have no company this evening?"

"Oh! there is a pause to-night! It's nearly as unceasing as your brother Simeon's old French lady in the *ronde* with her young bridegroom, till they danced her to pieces.

I do get now and then an hour's repose," Nataly added, with a vision springing up of the person to whom the story had applied.

"My dear, you are a good girl to call me Dartrey," the owner of the name said to Nesta.

Nataly saw them both alert, in the terrible manner peculiar to both, for the directest of the bare statements. She could have protested, that her love of truth was on an equality with theirs; and certainly, that her regard for decency was livelier. Pass the deficiency in a man. But a girl who could speak, by allusion, of Mrs. Marsett—of the existence of a Mrs. Marsett—in the presence of a man: and he excusing, encouraging: and this girl her own girl;—it seemed to her, that the world reeled; she could hardly acknowledge the girl; save under the penitential admission of her sin's having found her out.

She sent Nesta to her room when they went upstairs to dress, unable to endure her presence after seeing her show a placid satisfaction at Dartrey's nod to the request for

him to sleep in the house that night. It was not at all a gleam of pleasure, hardly an expression; it was a manner of saying, One drop more in my cup of good fortune!—an absurd and an offensive exhibition of silly optimism of the young, blind that they are!

For were it known, and surely the happening of it would be known, that Dudley Sowerby had shaken off the Nesta of no name, who was the abominable Mrs. Marsett's friend, a whirlwind with a trumpet would sweep them into the wilderness on a blast frightfuller than any ever heard.

Nataly had a fit of weeping for want of the girl's embrace, against whom her door was jealously locked. She hoped those two would talk much, madly if they liked, during dinner, that she might not be sensible, through any short silence, of the ardour animating them: especially glowing in Nesta, ready behind her quiet mask to come brazenly forth. But both of them were mercilessly ardent; and a sickness of the fear, that they might fall on her to capture her and hurry her along with them perforce of the allayed,

once fatal, inflammable element in herself, shook the warmth from her limbs : causing her to say to herself aloud in a ragged hoarseness, very strangely : Every thought of mine now has a physical effect on me !

They had not been two minutes together when she descended to them. Yet she saw the girl's heart brimming, either with some word spoken to her or for joy of an unmaidenly confession. During dinner they talked, without distressful pauses. Whatever said, what ever done, was manifestly another drop in Nesta's foolish happy cup. Could it be all because Dartrey Fenellan countenanced her acquaintance with that woman ? The mother had lost hold of her. The tortured mother had lost hold of herself.

Dartrey in the course of the evening, begged to hear the contralto ; and Nataly, refusing, was astounded by the admission in her blank mind of the truth of man's list of charges against her sex, starting from their capriciousness : for she could have sung in a crowded room, and she had now a desire for company, for stolid company or giddy, an

ocean of it. This led to her thinking, that the world of serious money-getters, and feasts, and the dance, the luxurious displays, and the reverential Sunday service, will always ultimately prove itself right in opposition to critics and rebels, and to anyone vainly trying to stand alone: and the thought annihilated her; for she was past the age of the beginning again, and no footing was left for an outsider not self-justified in being where she stood. She heard Dartrey's praise of Nesta's voice for tearing her mother's bosom with notes of intolerable sweetness; and it was hap-hazard irony, no doubt; we do not the less bleed for the accident of a shot.

At last, after midnight Victor arrived.

Nesta most impudently expected to be allowed to remain. "Pray, go, dear," her mother said. Victor kissed his Fredi. "Some time to-morrow," said he; and she forbore to beseech him.

He stared, though mildly, at sight of her taking Dartrey's hand for the good-night and deliberately putting her lips to it.

Was she a girl whose notion of rectifying

one wrong thing done, was to do another? Nataly could merely observe. A voice pertaining to no one present, said in her ear:—Mothers have publicly slapped their daughters' faces for less than that!—It was the voice of her incapacity to cope with the girl. She watched Nesta's passage from the room, somewhat affected by the simple bearing for which she was reproaching her.

“And our poor darling has not seen a mountain this year!” Victor exclaimed, to have mentionable grounds for pitying his girl. “I promised Fredi she should never count a year without Highlands or Alps. You remember, mama?—down in the West Highlands. Fancy the dear bit of bundle, Dartrey!—we had laid her in her bed; she was about seven or eight; and there she lay wide awake.—‘What's Fredi thinking of?’—‘I'm thinking of the tops of the mountains at night, dada.’—She would climb them now; she has the legs.”

Nataly said: “You have some report to make. You *dined* with those people?”

“The Marsetts: yes:—well-suited couple

enough. It's to happen before Winter ends—at once; before Christmas; positively before next Spring. Fredi's doing! He has to manage, arrange. — She's a good-looking woman, good height, well-rounded; well-behaved, too: she won't make a bad Lady Marsett. Every time that woman spoke of our girl, the tears jumped to her eyelids."

"Come to me before you go to bed," Nataly said, rising, her voice foundering; "Good-night, Dartrey."

She turned to the door; she could not trust herself to shake hands with composure. Not only was it a nauseous mixture she was forced to gulp from Victor, it burned like a poison.

"Really Fredi's doing—chiefly," said Victor, as soon as Dartrey and he were alone, comfortably settled in the smoking-room. "I played the man of pomp with Marsett—good heavy kind of creature: attached to the woman. She's the better horse, as far as brains go. Good enough Lady Marsett. I harped on Major Worrell: my daughter insulted. He knew of it—spoke of you

properly. The man offered all apologies; has told the Major he is no gentleman, not a fit associate for gentlemen:—quite so:—and has cut him dead. Will marry her, as I said, make her as worthy as he can of the honour of my daughter's acquaintance. Rather comical grimace, when he vowed he'd fasten the tie. He doesn't like marriage. But he can't give her up. And she's for patronizing the institution. But she is ready to say good-bye to him: 'rather than see the truest lady in the world insulted:'—her words. And so he swallows his dose for health, and looks a trifle sourish. Antecedents, I suppose: has to stomach them. But if a man's fond of a woman—if he knows he saves her from slipping lower—and it's an awful world, for us to let a woman be under its wheels:—I say, a woman who has a man to lean on, unless she's as downright corrupt as two or three of the men we've known:—upon my word, Dartrey, I come round to some of your ideas on these matters. It's this girl of mine, this wee bit of girl in her little nightshirt with the frill, astonishes me most:—thinking

of the tops of the mountains at night!’ She has positively done the whole of this work—main part. I smiled when I left the house, to have to own our little Fredi starting us all on the road. It seems, Marsett had sworn he would; amorous vow, you know; he never came nearer to doing it. I hope it’s his better mind now; I do hope the man won’t have cause to regret it. He speaks of Nesta—sort of rustic tone of awe. Mrs. Marsett has impressed him. He expects the title soon, will leave the army—the poor plucked British army, as you call it!—and lead the life of a country squire:—hunting! Well, it’s not only the army, it’s over Great Britain, with this infernal wealth of ours!—and all for pleasure—eh?—or Paradise lost for a sugar plum! Eh, Dartrey? Upon my word, it appears to me, Esau’s the Englishman, Jacob the German, of these times. I wonder old Colney hasn’t said it. If we’re not plucked, as your regiments are of the officers who have learnt their work, we’re emasculated:—the nation’s half made-up of the idle and the servants of the idle.”

“Ay, and your country squires and your manufacturers contrive to give the army a body of consumptive louts fit for nothing else than to take the shilling—and not worth it,” said Dartrey.

“Sounds like old Colney,” Victor remarked to himself. “But, believe me, I’m ashamed of the number of servants who wait on me. It wouldn’t so much matter, as Skepsey says, if they were trained to arms and self-respect. That little fellow Skepsey’s closer to the right notion, and the right practice, too, than any of us. With his Matilda Pridden! He has jumped out of himself to the proper idea of women, too. And there’s a man who has been up three times before the magistrates, and is considered a disorderly subject—one among the best of English citizens, I declare! I never think of Skepsey without the most extraordinary, witless kind of envy—as if he were putting in action an idea I once had and never quite got hold of again. The match for him is Fredi. She threatens to be just as devoted, just as simple, as he. I positively doubt whether any of us could stop

her, if she had set herself to do a thing she thought right."

"I should not like to think our trying it possible," said Dartrey.

"All very well, but it's a rock ahead. We shall have to alter our course, my friend. You know, I dined with that couple, after the private twenty minutes with Marsett:—he formally propounded the invitation, as we were close on his hour, rather late: and I wanted to make the woman happy, besides putting a seal of cordiality on his good intentions—politic! And subsequently I heard from her, that—you'll think nothing of it!—Freda promised to stand by her at the altar."

Dartrey said, shrugging: "She needn't do that."

"So we may say. You're dealing with Nesta Victoria. Spare me a contest with that girl, I undertake to manage any man or woman living."

"When the thing to be done is thought right by her."

"But can we always trust her judgement, my dear Dartrey?"

“In this case, she would argue, that her resolution to keep her promise would bind or help to bind Marsett to fulfil his engagement.”

“Odd, her mother has turned dead round in favour of that fellow Dudley Sowerby! I don’t complain; it suits; but one thinks—eh?—women!”

“Well, yes, one thinks or should think, that if you insist on having women rooted to the bed of the river, they’ll veer with the tides, like water-weeds, and no wonder.”

“Your heterodoxy on that subject is a mania, Dartrey. We can’t have women independent.”

“Then don’t be exclaiming about their vagaries.”

Victor mused: “It’s wonderful: that little girl of mine!—good height now: but what a head she has! Oh, she’ll listen to reason: only mark what I say:—with that quiet air of hers, the husband, if a young fellow, will imagine she’s the most docile of wives in the world. And as to wife, I’m not of the contrary opinion. But quâ individual female, supposing her to have laid fast hold of an

idea of duty, it's he who'll have to turn the corner second, if they're to trot in the yoke together. Or it may be an idea of service to a friend—or to her sex! That Mrs. Marsett says she feels for—'bleeds' for her sex. The poor woman didn't show to advantage with me, because she was in a fever to please:—talks in jerks, hot phrases. She holds herself well. At the end of the dinner she behaved better. Odd, you can teach women with hints and a lead. But Marsett's Marsett to the end. Rather touching!—the poor fellow said: Deuce of a bad look-out for me if Judith doesn't have a child! First-rate sportsman, I hear. He should have thought of his family earlier. You know, Dartrey, the case is to be argued for the family as well. You won't listen. And for Society too! Off you go."

A battery was opened on that wall of composite.

"Ah, well," said Victor. "But I may have to beg your help, as to the so-called promise to stand at the altar. I don't mention it upstairs."

He went to Nataly's room.

She was considerably treated, and was aware of being dandled, that she might have sleep.

She consented to it, in a loathing of the topic. —Those women invade us—we cannot keep them out! was her inward cry: with a reverberation of the unfailing accompaniment:—The world holds you for one of them!

Victor tasked her too much when his perpetual readiness to doat upon his girl for whatever she did, set him exalting Nesta's conduct. She thought: Was Nesta so sympathetic with her mother of late by reason of a moral insensibility to the offence?

This was her torture through the night of a labouring heart, that travelled to one dull shock, again and again repeated:—the apprehended sound, in fact, of Dudley Sowerby's knock at the street door. Or sometimes a footman handed her his letter, courteously phrased to withdraw from the alliance. Or else he came to a scene with Nesta, and her mother was dragged into it, and the intolerable subject steamed about her. The girl was visioned as deadly. She might be

indifferent to the protection of Dudley's name. Robust, sanguine, Victor's child, she might—her mother listened to a devil's whisper:—but no; Nesta's aim was at the heights; she was pure in mind as in body. No, but the world would bring the accusation; and the world would trace the cause: Heredity, it would say. Would it say falsely? Nataly harped on the interrogation until she felt her existence dissolving to a dark stain of the earth, and she found herself wondering at the breath she drew, doubting that another would follow, speculating on the cruel force which keeps us to the act of breathing.—Though I could draw wild blissful breath if I were galloping across the moors! her worn heart said to her youth: and out of ken of the world, I could regain a portion of my self-esteem.—Nature thereat renewed her old sustainment with gentle murmurs, that were supported by Dr. Themison's account of the virtuous married lady who chafed at the yoke on behalf of her sex, and deemed the independent union the ideal. Nataly's brain had a short gallop over moorland. It brought her face

to face with Victor's girl, and she dropped once more to her remorse in herself and her reproaches of Nesta. The girl had inherited from her father something of the cataract's force which won its way by catching or by mastering, uprooting, ruining!

In the morning she was heavily asleep. Victor left word with Nesta, that the dear mother was not to be disturbed. Consequently, when Dudley called to see Mrs. Victor Radnor, he was informed that Miss Radnor would receive him.

Their interview lasted an hour.

Dudley came to Victor in the City about luncheon time. His perplexity of countenance was eloquent. He had, before seeing the young lady, digested an immense deal: more, as it seemed to him, than any English gentleman should be asked to consume. She now referred him to her father, who had spent a day in Brighton, and would, she said, explain whatever there was to be explained. But she added, that if she was expected to abandon a friend, she could not. Dudley had argued with her upon the nature

of friendship, the measurement of its various dues ; he had lectured on the choice of friends, the impossibility for young ladies, necessarily inexperienced, to distinguish the right class of friends, the dangers they ran in selecting friends unwarranted by the stamp of honourable families.

“ And what did Fredi say to that ? ” Victor inquired.

“ Miss Radnor said—I may be dense, I cannot comprehend—that the precepts were suitable for seminaries of Pharisees. When it is a question of a young lady associating with a notorious woman ! ”

“ Not notorious. You spoil your case if you ‘ speak extremely,’ as a friend says. I saw her yesterday. She worships ‘ Miss Radnor.’ ”

“ Nesta will know when she is older ; she will thank me,” Dudley said hurriedly. “ As it is at present, I may reckon, I hope, that the association ceases. Her name—I have to consider my family.”

“ Good anchorage ! You must fight it out with the girl. And depend upon this—

you're not the poorer for being the husband of a girl of character; unless you try to bridle her. She belongs to her time. I don't mind owing to you, she has given me a lead.—Fredì 'll be merry to-night. Here's a letter I have from the Sanfredini, dated Milan, fresh this morning; invitation to bring the god-child to her villa on Como in May; desirous to embrace her. She wrote to the office. Not a word of her *duque*. She has pitched him to the winds. You may like to carry it off to Fredì and please her."

"I have business," Dudley replied.

"Away to it, then!" said Victor. "You stand by me?—we expect our South London borough to be open in January; early next year, at least; may be February. You have family interest there."

"Personally, I will do my best," Dudley said; and he escaped, feeling, with the universal censor's angry spite, that the revolutions of the world had made one of the wealthiest of City men the head of a set of Bohemians. And there are eulogists of

the modern time! And the man's daughter was declared to belong to it! A visit in May to the Italian cantatrice separated from her husband, would render the maiden an accomplished flinger of caps over the wind-mills.

At home Victor discovered, that there was not much more than a truce between Nesta and Nataly. He had a medical hint from Dr. Themison, and he counselled his girl to humour her mother as far as could be: particularly in relation to Dudley, whom Nataly now, woman-like, after opposing, strongly favoured. How are we ever to get a clue to the labyrinthine convolutions and changeful motives of the sex! Dartrey's theories were absurd. Did Nataly think them dangerous for a young woman? The guess hinted at a clue of some sort to the secret of her veering.

"Mr. Sowerby left me with an adieu," said Nesta.

"Mr. Sowerby! My dear, he is bound, bound in honour, bound at heart. You did not dismiss him?"

"I repeated the word he used. I thought of mother. The blood leaves her cheeks at a disappointment now. She has taken to like him."

"Why, you like him!"

"I could not vow."

"Tush."

"Ah, don't press me, dada. But you will see, he has disengaged himself."

He had done it, though not in formal speech. Slow digestion of his native antagonism to these Bohemians, to say nothing of his judicial condemnation of them, brought him painfully round to the writing of a letter to Nataly; cunningly addressed to the person on whom his instinct told him he had the strongest hold.

She schooled herself to discuss the detested matter forming Dudley's grievance and her own with Nesta; and it was a woeful half-hour for them. But Nataly was not the weeper.

Another interview ensued between Nesta and her suitor. Dudley bore no resemblance to Mr. Barmby, who refused to take the word

no from her, and had taken it, and had gone to do holy work, for which she revered him. Dudley took the word, leaving her to imagine freedom, until once more her mother or her father, inspired by him, came interceding, her mother actually supplicating. So that the reality of Dudley's love rose to conception like a London dawn over Nesta; and how, honourably, decently, positively, to sever herself from it, grew to be an ill-visaged problem. She glanced in soul at Dartrey Fenellan for help; she had her wild thoughts. Having once called him Dartrey, the virginal barrier to thoughts was broken; and but for love of her father, for love and pity of her mother, she would have ventured the step to make the man who had her whole being in charge accept or reject her. Nothing else appeared in prospect. Her father and mother were urgently one to favour Dudley; and the sensitive gentleman presented himself to receive his wound and depart with it. But always he returned. At last, as if under tuition, he refrained from provoking a wound; he stood there to win her upon any terms;

and he was a handsome figure, acknowledged by the damsel to be increasing in good looks as more and more his pretensions became distasteful to her. The slight cast of sourness on his lower features had almost vanished, his nature seemed to have enlarged. He complimented her for her "generous benevolence," vaguely, yet with evident sincerity; he admitted, that the modern world is "attempting difficulties with at least commendable intentions;" and that the position of women demands improvement, consideration for them also. He said feelingly: "They have to bear extraordinary burdens!" There he stopped.

The sharp intelligence fronting him understood, that this compassionate ejaculation was the point where she, too, must cry halt. He had, however—still under tuition, perhaps—withdrawn his voice from the pursuit of her; and so she in gratitude silenced her critical mind beneath a smooth conceit of her having led him two steps to a broader tolerance. Susceptible as she was, she did not influence him without being affected herself in other

things than her vanity: his prudishness affected her. Only when her heart flamed did she disdain that real haven of refuge, with its visionary mount of superiority, offered by Society to its elect, in the habit of ignoring the sins it fosters under cloak;—not less than did the naked barbaric time, and far more to the vitiation of the soul. He fancied he was moulding her; therefore winning her. It followed, that he had the lover's desire for assurance of exclusive possession; and reflecting, that he had greatly pardoned, he grew exacting. He mentioned his objections to some of Mr. Dartrey Fenellan's ideas.

Nesta replied: "I have this morning had two letters to make me happy."

A provoking evasion. He would rather have seen antagonism bridle and stiffen her figure. "Is one of them from that gentleman?"

"One is from my dear friend Louise de Seilles. She comes to me early next month."

"The other?"

"The other is also from a friend."

"A dear friend?"

“Not so dear. Her letter gives me happiness.”

“She writes—not from France: from . . .? you tempt me to guess.”

“She writes to tell me, that Mr. Dartrey Fenellan has helped her in a way to make her eternally thankful.”

“The place she writes from is . . .?”

The drag of his lips betrayed his enlightenment. He insisted on doubting. He demanded assurance,

“It matters in no degree,” she said.

Dudley “thought himself excusable for inquiring.”

She bowed gently.

The stings and scorpions and degrading itches of this nest of wealthy Bohemians enraged him.

“Are you—I beg to ask—are you still:—I can hardly think it—Nesta!—I surely have a claim to advise:—it cannot be with your mother’s consent:—in communication, in correspondence with . . .?”

Again she bowed her head; saying: “It is true.”

“With that person?”

He could not but look the withering disgust of the modern world in a conservative gentleman who has been lured to go with it a little way, only to be bitten. “I decline to believe it,” he said with forcible sound.

“She is married,” was the rather shameless, exasperating answer.

“Married or not!” he cried, and murmured: “I have borne—. These may be Mr. Dartrey Fenellan’s ideas; they are not mine. I have—Something at least is due to me. Ask any lady:—there are clergymen, I know, clergymen who are for uplifting—quite right, but not associating:—to call one of them a friend! Ask any lady, any! Your mother . . .”

“I beg you will not distress my mother,” said Nesta.

“I beg to know whether this correspondence is to continue?” said Dudley.

“All my life, if I do not feel dishonoured by it.”

“You are.” He added hastily: “Counsels of prudence:—there is not a lady living who would tell you otherwise. At all events, in

public opinion, if it were known—and it would certainly be known,—a lady, wife or spinster, would suffer—would not escape the—at least shadow of defilement from relationship, any degree of intimacy with . . . hard words are wholesome in such a case:—‘touch pitch,’ yes! My sense is coherent.”

“Quite,” said Nesta.

“And you do not agree with me?”

“I do not.”

“Do you pretend to be as able to judge as I?”

“In this instance, better.”

“Then I retire. I cannot retain my place here. You may depend upon it, the world is not wrong when it forbids young ladies to have cognizance of women leading disorderly lives.”

“Only the women, Mr. Sowerby?”

“Men, too, of course.”

“You do not exclude the men from Society.”

“Oh! one reads that kind of argument in books.”

“Oh! the worthy books, then. I would read them, if I could find them.”

“They are banned by self-respecting readers.”

“It grieves me to think differently.”

Dudley looked on this fair girl, as yet innocent girl; and contrasting her with the foulness of the subject she dared discuss, it seemed to him, that a world which did not puff at her and silence, if not extinguish, was in a state of liquefaction.

Remembering his renewed repentances in absence, he said: “I do hope you may come to see, that the views shared by your mother and me are not erroneous.”

“But do not distress her,” Nesta implored him. “She is not well. When she has grown stronger, her kind heart will move her to receive the lady, so that she may not be deprived of the society of good women. I shall hope she will not disapprove of me. I cannot forsake a friend.”

“I beg to say good-bye,” said Dudley.

She had seen a rigidity smite him as she spoke; and so little startling was it, that she might have fancied it expected, save for her knowing herself too serious to have played at wiles to gain her ends.

He "wished her prudent advisers."

She thanked him. "In a few days, Louise de Seilles will be here."

A Frenchwoman and Papist! was the interjection of his twist of brows.

Surely I must now be free? she thought when he had covered his farewell under a salutation regretful in frostiness.

A week later, she had the embrace of her Louise, and Armandine was made happy with a piece of Parisian riband.

Winter was rapidly in passage: changes were visible everywhere; Earth and House of Commons and the South London borough exhibited them; Mrs. Burman was the sole exception. To the stupefaction of physicians, in a manner to make a sane man ask whether she was not being retained as an instrument for one of the darker purposes of Providence—and where are we standing if we ask such things?—she held on to her thread of life.

February went by. And not a word from Themison; nor from Carling, nor from the Rev. Groseman Buttermore, nor from Jarniman. That is to say, the two former accepted

invitations to grand dinners; the two latter acknowledged contributions to funds in which they were interested; but they had apparently grown to consider Mrs. Burman as an establishment, one of our fixtures. On the other hand, there was nothing to be feared from her. Lakelands feared nothing: the entry into Lakelands was decreed for the middle of April. Those good creatures enclosed the poor woman and nourished her on comfortable fiction. So the death of the member for the South London borough (fifteen years younger than the veteran in maladies) was not to be called premature, and could by no possibility lead to an exposure of the private history of the candidate for his vacant seat.

CHAPTER XII.

AN EXPIATION.

NATALY had fallen to be one of the solitary who have no companionship save with the wound they nurse, to chafe it rather than try at healing. So rational a mind as she had was not long in outliving mistaken impressions ; she could distinguish her girl's feeling, and her aim ; she could speak on the subject with Dartrey ; and still her wound bled on. Louise de Seilles comforted her partly, through an exaltation of Nesta. Mademoiselle, however, by means of a change of tone and look when Dudley Sowerby and Dartrey Fenellan were the themes, showed a too pronounced preference of the more unstable one :—or rather, the man adventurous out of the world's highways, whose image,

as husband of such a daughter as hers, smote the wounded mother with a chillness. Mademoiselle's occasional thrill of fervency in an allusion to Dartrey, might have tempted a suspicious woman to indulge suppositions, accounting for the young Frenchwoman's novel tenderness to England, of which Nesta proudly, very happily, boasted. The suspicion proposed itself, and was rejected: for not even the fever of an insane body could influence Nataly's generous character, to let her moods divert and command her thoughts of persons.

Her thoughts were at this time singularly lucid upon everything about her; with the one exception of the reason why she had come to favour Dudley, and how it was she had been smitten by that woman at Brighton to see herself in her position altogether with the world's relentless, unexamining hard eyes. Bitterness added, of Mrs. Marsett: She is made an honest woman!—And there was a strain of the lower in Nataly, to reproach the girl for causing the reflection to be cast on the unwedded. Otherwise her mind was

open; she was of aid to Victor in his confusion over some lost Idea he had often touched on latterly. And she was the one who sent him ahead at a trot under a light, by saying: "You would found a new and more stable aristocracy of the contempt of luxury:" when he talked of combatting the Jews with a superior weapon. That being, in fact, as Colney Durance had pointed out to him, the weapon of self-conquest used by them "before they fell away to fleshpottery." Was it his Idea? He fancied an aching at the back of his head when he speculated. But his Idea had been surpassingly luminous, alive, a creation; and this came before him with the yellow skin of a Theory, bred, born of books. Though Nataly's mention of the aristocracy of self-denying discipline struck a Lucifer in his darkness.

Nesta likewise helped: but more in what she did than in what she said: she spoke intelligently enough to make him feel a certain increase of alarm, amounting to a cursory secret acknowledgement of it, both at her dealings with Dudley and with himself. She

so quietly displaced the lady visiting him at the City offices. His girl's disregard of hostile weather, and her company, her talk, delighted him: still he remonstrated, at her coming daily. She came: nor was there an instigation on the part of her mother, clearly none: her mother asked him once whether he thought she met the dreadful Brighton woman. His Fredi drove constantly to walk back beside him Westward, as he loved to do whenever it was practicable; and exceeding the flattery of his possession of the gallant daughter, her conversation charmed him to forget a disappointment caused by the defeat and entire exclusion of the lady visiting him so complimentarily for his advice on stocks, shares, mines, et cætera. The lady resisted; she was vanquished, as the shades are displaced by simple apparition of daylight. His Fredi was like the daylight to him; she was the very daylight to his mind, whatsoever their theme of converse: for by stimulating that ready but vagrant mind to quit the leash of the powerful senses and be æthereally excursive, she gave him a new enjoyment;

which led to reflections—a sounding of Nature, almost a question to her, on the verge of a doubt. Are we, in fact, harmonious with the Great Mother when we yield to the pressure of our natures for indulgence? Is she, when translated into us, solely the imperious appetite? Here was Fredi, his little Fredi—stately girl that she had grown, and grave, too, for all her fun and her sail on wings—lifting him to pleasures not followed by clamorous, and perfectly satisfactory, yet discomposingly violent, appeals to Nature. They could be vindicated. Or could they, when they would not bear a statement of the case? He could not imagine himself stating it namelessly to his closest friend—not to Simeon Fenellan. As for speaking to Dartrey, the notion took him with shivers:—Young Dudley would have seemed a more possible confidant:—and he represented the Puritan world.—And young Dudley was getting over Fredi's infatuation for the woman she had rescued: he was beginning to fancy he saw a right enthusiasm in it;—in the abstract; if only the fair maid would drop an

unseemly acquaintance. He had called at the office to say so. Victor stammered the plea for him.

“Never, dear father,” came the smooth answer: a shocking answer in contrast with the tones. Her English was as lucid as her eyes when she continued up to the shock she dealt: “Do not encourage a good man to waste his thoughts upon me. I have chosen my mate, and I may never marry him. I do not know whether he would marry me. He has my soul. I have no shame in saying I love him. It is to love goodness, greatness of heart. He is a respecter of women—of all women; not only the fortunate. He is the friend of the weaker everywhere. He has been proved in fire. He does not sentimentalize over poor women, as we know who scorns people for doing:—and that is better than hardness, meaning kindly. He is not one of the unwise advocates. He measures the forces against them. He reads their breasts. He likes me. He is with me in my plans. He has not said, has not shown, he loves me. It is too high a thought for me until I hear it.”

“Has your soul!” was all that Victor could reply, while the whole conception of Lake-lands quaked under the crumbling structure.

Remonstrance, argument, a word for Dudley, swelled to his lips and sank in dumbness. Her seeming intuition—if it was not a perception—of the point where submission to the moods of his nature had weakened his character, and required her defence of him, struck Victor with a serious fear of his girl: and it was the more illuminatingly damnatory for being recognized as the sentiment which no father should feel. He tried to think she ought not to be so wise of the things of the world. An effort to imagine a reproof, showed him her spirit through her eyes: in her deeds too: she had already done work on the road:—Colney Durance, Dartrey Fenellan, anything but sentimentalists either of them, strongly backing her, upholding her. Victor could no longer so naturally name her Fredi.

He spoke it hastily, under plea of some humorous tenderness, when he ventured. When Dudley, calling on him in the City to discuss the candidature for the South London

borough, named her Fredi, that he might regain a vantage of familiarity by imitating her father, it struck Victor as audacious. It jarred in his recollection, though the heir of the earldom spoke in the tone of a lover, was really at high pitch. He appeared to be appreciating her, to have suffered stings of pain; he offered himself; he made but one stipulation. Victor regretfully assured him, he feared he could do nothing. The thought of his entry into Lakelands, with Nesta Victoria refusing the foundation stone of the place, grew dim.

But he was now canvassing for the Borough, hearty at the new business as the braced swimmer on seas, which instantly he became, with an end in view to be gained.

Late one April night, expecting Nataly to have gone to bed, and Nesta to be waiting for him, he reached home, and found Nataly in her sitting-room alone. "Nesta was tired," she said: "we have had a scene; she refuses Mr. Sowerby; I am sick of pressing it; he is very much in earnest, painfully; she blames him for disturbing me; she will not see the

right course:—a mother reads her daughter! If my girl has not guidance!—she means rightly, she is rash.”

Nataly could not utter all that her insanness of feeling made her think with regard to Victor's daughter—daughter also of the woman whom her hard conscience accused of inflammability. “Here is a note from Dr. Themison, dear.”

Victor seized it, perused, and drew the big breath.

“From Themison,” he said; he coughed.

“Don't think to deceive me,” said she. “I have not read the contents, I know them.”

“The invitation at last, for to-morrow, Sunday, four p.m. Odd, that next day at eight of the evening I shall be addressing our meeting in the Theatre. Simeon speaks. Beaves Urmsing insists on coming, Tory though he is. Those Tories are jollier fellows than—well, no wonder! There will be no surgical . . . the poor woman is very low. A couple of days at the outside. Of course, I go.”

“Hand me the note, dear.”

It had to be given up, out of the pocket.

“But,” said Victor, “the mention of you is merely formal.”

She needed sleep : she bowed her head.

Nataly was the first at the breakfast-table in the morning, a fair Sunday morning. She was going to Mrs. John Cormyn’s Church, and she asked Nesta to come with her.

She returned five minutes before the hour of lunch, having left Nesta with Mrs. John. Louise de Seilles undertook to bring Nesta home at the time she might choose. Fenellan, Mr. Pempton, Peridon and Catkin, lunched and chatted. Nataly chatted. At a quarter to three o’clock Victor’s carriage was at the door. He rose ; he had to keep an appointment. Nataly said to him publicly : “I come too.” He stared and nodded. In the carriage, he said : “I’m driving to the Gardens, for a stroll, to have a look at the beasts. Sort of relief. Poor crazy woman !—However, it’s a comfort to her : so ! . . .”

“I like to see them,” said Nataly. “I shall see her. I have to do it.”

Up to the gate of the Gardens Victor was

arguing to dissuade his dear soul from this very foolish, totally unnecessary, step. Alighting, he put the matter aside, for good angels to support his counsel at the final moment.

Bears, lions, tigers, eagles, monkeys: they suggested no more than he would have had from prints; they sprang no reflection, except, that the coming hour was a matter of indifference to them. They were about him, and exercised so far a distraction. He took very kindly to an old mother monkey, relinquishing her society at sight of Nataly's heave of the bosom. Southward, across the park, the dread house rose. He began quoting Colney Durance with relish while sarcastically confuting the cynic, who found much pasture in these Gardens. Over Southward, too, he would be addressing a popular assembly to-morrow evening. Between now and then there was a ditch to jump. He put on the sympathetic face of grief. "After all, a caged wild beast hasn't so bad a life," he said.—To be well fed while they live, and welcome death as a release from the maladies

they develop in idleness, is the condition of wealthy people :—creatures of prey ? horrible thought ! yet allied to his Idea, it seemed. Yes, but these good caged beasts here set them an example, in not troubling relatives and friends when they come to the gasp ! Mrs. Burman's invitation loomed as monstrous—a final act of her cruelty. His skin pricked with dews. He thought of Nataly beside him, jumping the ditch with him, as a relief—if she insisted on doing it. He hoped she would not, for the sake of her composure.

It was a ditch void of bottom. But it was a mere matter of an hour, less. The state of health of the invalid could bear only a few minutes. In any case, we are sure that the hour will pass. Our own arrive ? Certainly. "Capital place for children !" he exclaimed. And here startlingly before him in the clusters of boys and girls, was the difference between young ones and their elders feeling quite as young : the careless youngsters have not to go and sit in the room with a virulent old woman, and express penitence and what not, and hear words of pardon, after

their holiday scamper and stare at the caged beasts.

Attention to the children precipitated him upon acquaintances, hitherto cleverly shunned. He nodded them off, after the brightest of greetings.

Such anodyne as he could squeeze from the incarcerated wild creatures, was exhausted. He fell to work at Nataly's 'aristocracy of the contempt of luxury'; signifying, that we the wealthy will not exist to pamper flesh, but we live for the promotion of brotherhood:—ay, and that our England must make some great moral stand, if she is not to fall to the rear and down. Unuttered, it caught the skirts of the Idea: it evaporated when spoken. Still, this theme was almost an exorcism of Mrs. Burman. He consulted his watch. "Thirteen minutes to four. I must be punctual," he said. Nataly stepped faster.

Seated in the carriage, he told her he had never felt the horror of that place before. "Put me down at the corner of the terrace, dear: I won't drive to the door."

"I come with you, Victor," she replied.

After entreaties and reasons intermixed, to melt her resolve, he saw she was firm: and he asked himself, whether he might not be constitutionally better adapted to persuade than to dissuade. The question thumped. Having that house of drugs in view, he breathed more freely for the prospect of feeling his Nataly near him beneath the roof.

“You really insist, dear love?” he appealed to her: and her answer: “It must be,” left no doubt: though he chose to say: “Not because of standing by me?” And she said: “For my peace, Victor.” They stepped to the pavement. The carriage was dismissed.

Seventeen houses of the terrace fronting the park led to the funereal one: and the bell was tolled in the breast of each of the couple advancing with an air of calmness to the inevitable black door.

Jarniman opened it. “His mistress was prepared to see them.”—Not like one near death.—They were met in the hall by the Rev. Groseman Buttermore. “You will find a welcome,” was his reassurance to them, gently delivered, on the stoop of a large

person. His whispered tones were more agreeably deadening than his words.

Mr. Buttermore ushered them upstairs.

“Can she bear it?” Victor said, and heard: “Her wish: ten minutes.”

“Soon over,” he murmured to Nataly, with a compassionate exclamation for the invalid.

They rounded the open door. They were in the drawing-room. It was furnished as in the old time, gold and white, looking new; all the same as of old, save for a division of silken hangings; and these were pale blue: the colour preferred by Victor for a bedroom. He glanced at the ceiling, to bathe in a blank space out of memory. Here she lived, here she slept, behind the hangings. There was refreshingly that little difference in the arrangement of the room. The corner Northward was occupied by the grand piano; and Victor had an inquiry in him:—tuned? He sighed, expecting a sight to come through the hangings. Sensible that Nataly trembled, he perceived the Rev. Groseman Buttermore half across a heap of shawl-swathe on the sofa.

Mrs. Burman was present; seated. People

may die seated ; she had always disliked the extended posture ; except for the night's rest, she used to say ; imagining herself to be not inviting the bolt of sudden death, in her attitude, when seated by day :—and often at night the poor woman had to sit up for the qualms of her dyspepsia !—But I'm bound to think humanely, be Christian, be kind, benignant, he thought, and he fetched the spirit required, to behold her face emerge from a pale blue silk veiling ; as it were, the inanimate wasted led up from the mould by morning.

Mr. Buttermore signalled to them to draw near.

Wasted though it was, the face of the wide orbits for sunken eyes was distinguishable as the one once known. If the world could see it and hear, that it called itself a man's wife ! She looked burnt out.

Two chairs had been set to front the sofa. Execution there ! Victor thought, and he garrotted the unruly mind of a man really feeling devoutness in the presence of the shadow thrown by the dread Shade.

"Ten minutes," Mr. Buttermore said low, after obligingly placing them on the chairs.

He went. They were alone with Mrs. Burman.

No voice came. They were unsure of being seen by the floating grey of eyes patient to gaze from their vast distance. Big drops fell from Nataly's. Victor heard the French time-piece on the mantel-shelf, where a familiar gilt Cupid swung for the seconds: his own purchase. The time of day on the clock was wrong; the Cupid swung.

Nataly's mouth was taking breath of anguish at moments. More than a minute of the terrible length of the period of torture must have gone: two, if not three.

A quaver sounded. "You have come." The voice was articulate, thinner than the telephonic, trans-Atlantic by deep-sea cable.

Victor answered: "We have."

Another minute must have gone in the silence. And when we get to five minutes we are on the descent, rapidly counting our way out of the house, into the fresh air,

where we were half an hour back, among those happy beasts in the pleasant Gardens!

Mrs. Burman's eyelids shut. "I said you would come."

Victor started to the fire-screen. "Your sight requires protection."

She dozed. "And Natalia Dreighton!" she next said.

They were certainly now on the five minutes. Now for the slide downward and outward! Nataly should never have been allowed to come.

"The white waistcoat!" struck his ears.

"Old customs with me, always!" he responded. "The first of April, always. White is a favourite. Pale blue, too. But I fear—I hope you have not distressing nights? In my family we lay great stress on the nights we pass. My cousins, the Miss Duvidneys, go so far as to judge of the condition of health by the nightly record."

"Your daughter was in their house."

"She knew everything!"

"Very fond of my daughter—the ladies," he remarked.

“I wish her well.”

“You are very kind.”

Mrs. Burman communed within or slept.

“Victor, Natalia, we will pray,” she said.

Her trembling hands crossed their fingers. Nataly slipped to her knees.

The two women mutely praying, pulled Victor into the devotional hush. It acted on him like the silent spell of service in a Church. He forgot his estimate of the minutes, he formed a prayer, he refused to hear the Cupid swinging, he droned a sound of sentences to deaden his ears. Ideas of eternity rolled in semblance of enormous clouds. Death was a black bird among them. The piano rang to Nataly's young voice and his. The gold and white of the chairs welcomed a youth suddenly enrolled among the wealthy by an enamoured old lady on his arm. Cupid tick-ticked.—Poor soul! poor woman! How little we mean to do harm when we do an injury! An incomprehensible world indeed at the bottom and at the top. We get on fairly at the centre. Yet it is there that we do the mischief making such

a riddle of the bottom and the top. What is to be said! Prayer quiets one. Victor peered at Nataly fervently on her knees and Mrs. Burman bowed over her knotted fingers. The earnestness of both enforced an effort at a phrased prayer in him. Plunging through a wave of the scent of Maréchale, that was a tremendous memory to haul him backward and forward, he beheld his prayer dancing across the furniture; a diminutive thin black figure, elvish, irreverent, appallingly unlike his proper emotion; and he brought his hands just to touch, and got to the edge of his chair, with spilt knees. At once the figure vanished. By merely looking at Nataly, he passed into her prayer. A look at Mrs. Burman made it personal, his own. He heard the cluck of a horrible sob coming from him. After a repetition of his short form of prayer deeply stressed, he thanked himself with the word "sincere," and a queer side-thought on our human susceptibility to the influence of posture. We are such creatures.

Nataly resumed her seat. Mrs. Burman

had raised her head. She said: "We are at peace." She presently said, with effort: "It cannot last with me. I die in nature's way. I would bear forgiveness with me, that I may have it above. I give it here, to you, to all. My soul is cleansed, I trust. Much was to say. My strength will not. Unto God, you both!"

The Rev. Groseman Buttermore was moving on slippered step to the back of the sofa. Nataly dropped before the unseeing, scarce breathing, lady for an instant. Victor murmured an adieu, grateful for being spared the ceremonial shake of hands. He turned away, then turned back, praying for power to speak, to say that he had found his heart, was grateful, would hold her in memory. He fell on a knee before her, and forgot he had done so when he had risen. They were conducted by the rev. gentleman to the hall-door: he was not speechless. Jarniman uttered something.

That black door closed behind them.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NIGHT OF THE GREAT UNDELIVERED
SPEECH.

To a man issuing from a mortuary where a skull had voice, London may be restorative as air of Summer Alps. It is by contrast blooming life. Observe the fellowship of the houses shoulder to shoulder; and that straight ascending smoke of the preparation for dinner; and the good policeman yonder, blessedly idle on an orderly Sabbath evening; and the families of the minor people trotting homeward from the park to tea; here and again an amiable carriage of the superimposed people driving to pay visits; they are so social, friendly, inviting to him; they strip him of the shroud, sing of the sweet old world. He cannot but be moved

to the extremity of charitableness neighbouring on tears.

A stupefaction at the shock of the positive reminder, echo of the fact still shouting in his breast, that he had seen Mrs. Burman, and that the interview was over—the leaf turned and the book shut—held Victor in a silence until his gratefulness to London City was borne down by the more human burst of gratitude to the dying woman, who had spared him, as much as she could, a scene of the convulsive pathetic, and had not called on him for any utterance of penitence. That worm-like thread of voice came up to him still from sexton-depths: it sounded a larger forgiveness without the word. He felt the sorrow of it all, as he told Nataly; at the same time bidding her smell “the marvellous oxygen of the park.” He declared it to be quite equal to Lakelands.

She slightly pressed his arm for answer. Perhaps she did not feel so deeply? She was free of the horrid associations with the scent of Maréchale. At any rate, she had comported herself admirably!

Victor fancied he must have shuddered when he passed by Jarniman at the door, who was almost now seeing his mistress's ghost—would have the privilege to-morrow. He called a cab and drove to Mrs. John Cormyn's, at Nataly's request, for Nesta and mademoiselle; enjoying the Londonized odour of the cab. Nataly did not respond to his warm and continued eulogies of Mrs. Burman; she rather disappointed him. He talked of the gold and white furniture, he just alluded to the Cupid: reserving his mental comment, that the time-piece was all astray, the Cupid regular on the swing:—strange, touching, terrible, if really the silly gilt figure symbolized! . . . And we are a silly figure to be sitting in a cab imagining such things!—When Nesta and mademoiselle were opposite, he had the pleasure to see Nataly take Nesta's hand and hold it until they reached home. Those two talking together in the brief words of their deep feeling, had tones that were singularly alike: the mezzo-soprano filial to the divine maternal contralto. Those two dear ones mounted to Nataly's room.

The two dear ones showed themselves heart in heart together once more ; each looked the happier for it. Dartrey was among their dinner-guests, and Nataly took him to her little blue-room before she went to bed. He did not speak of their conversation to Victor, but counselled him to keep her from excitement. “ My dear fellow, if you had seen her with Mrs. Burman ! ” Victor said, and loudly praised her coolness. She was never below a situation, he affirmed.

He followed his own counsel to humour his Nataly. She began panting at a word about Mr. Barmby’s ready services. When, however, she related the state of affairs between Dartrey and Nesta, by the avowal of each of them to her, he said, embracing her : “ Your wisdom shall guide us, my love,” and almost extinguished a vexation by concealing it.

She sighed : “ If one could think, that a girl with Nesta’s revolutionary ideas of the duties of women, and their powers, would be safe—or at all rightly guided by a man who is both one of the noblest and the wildest in the ideas he entertains ! ”

Victor sighed too. He saw the earldom, which was to dazzle the gossips, crack on the sky in a futile rocket-bouquet.

She was distressed; she moaned: "My girl! my girl! I should wish to leave her with one who is more fixed—the old-fashioned husband. New ideas must come in politics, but in Society!—and for women! And the young having heads, are the most endangered. Nesta vows her life to it! Dartrey supports her!"

"See Colney," said Victor. "Odd, Colney does you good; some queer way he has. Though you don't care for his RIVAL TONGUES,—and the last number was funny, with Semhians on the Pacific, impressively addressing a farewell to his cricket-bat, before he whirls it away to Neptune—and the blue hand of his nation's protecting God observed to seize it!—Dead failure with the public, of course! However, he seems to seem wise with you. The poor old fellow gets his trouncing from the critics monthly. See Colney to-morrow, my love. Now go to sleep. We have got over the worst. I speak

at my Meeting to-morrow and am a champagne-bottle of notes and points for them."

His lost Idea drew close to him in sleep: or he thought so, when awaking to the conception of a people solidified, rich and poor, by the common pride of simple manhood. But it was not coloured, not a luminous globe: and the people were in drab, not a shining army on the march to meet the Future. It looked like a paragraph in a newspaper, upon which a Leading Article sits, dutifully arousing the fat worm of sarcastic humour under the ribs of cradled citizens, with an exposure of its excellent folly. He would not have it laughed at; still he could not admit it as more than a skirt of the robe of his Idea. For let none think him a mere City merchant, millionaire, boonfellow, or music-loving man of the world. He had ideas to shoot across future Ages;—provide against the shrinkage of our Coal-beds; against, and for, if you like, the thickening, jumbling, threatening excess of population in these Islands, in Europe, America, all over our habitable sphere. Now

that Mrs. Burman, on her way to bliss, was no longer the dungeon-cell for the man he would show himself to be, this name for successes, corporate nucleus of the enjoyments, this Victor Montgomery Radnor, intended impressing himself upon the world as a factory of ideas. Colney's insolent charge, that the English have no imagination—a doomed race, if it be true!—would be confuted. For our English require but the lighted leadership to come into cohesion, and step ranked, and chant harmoniously the song of their benevolent aim. And that astral head giving, as a commencement, example of the right use of riches, the nation is one, part of the riddle of the future solved.

Surely he had here the Idea? He had it so warmly, that his bath-water heated. Only the vision was wanted. On London Bridge he had *seen* it—a great thing done to the flash of brilliant results. That was after a fall.

There had been a fall also of the scheme of Lakelands.

Come to us with no superstitious whispers

of indications and significations in the fall! —But there had certainly been a moral fall, fully to the level of the physical, in the maintaining of that scheme of Lakelands, now ruined by his incomprehensible Nesta—who had saved him from falling further. His bath-water chilled. He jumped out and rubbed furiously with his towels and flesh-brushes, chasing the Idea for simple warmth, to have Something inside him, to feel just that sustainment; with the cry: But no one can say I do not love my Nataly! And he tested it to prove it by his readiness to die for her: which is heroically easier than the devotedly living, and has a weight of evidence in our internal Courts for surpassing the latter tedious performance. His Nesta had knocked Lakelands to pieces. Except for the making of money, the whole year of an erected Lakelands, notwithstanding uninterrupted successes, was a blank. Or rather we have to wish it were a blank. The scheme departs: payment for the enlisted servants of it is in prospect. A black agent, not willingly enlisted, yet pointing to proofs of service,

refuses payment in ordinary coin; and we tell him we owe him nothing, that he is not a man of the world, has no understanding of Nature: and still the fellow thumps and alarums at a midnight door we are astonished to find we have in our daylight house. How is it? Would other men be so sensitive to him? Victor was appeased by the assurance of his possession of an exceptionally scrupulous conscience; and he settled the debate by thinking: After all, for a man like me, battling incessantly, a kind of Vesuvius, I must have—can't be starved, must be fed—though, pah! But I'm not to be questioned like other men.—But how about an aristocracy of the contempt of distinctions?—But there is no escaping distinctions! my aristocracy despises indulgence.—And indulges?—Say, an exceptional nature!—Supposing a certain beloved woman to pronounce on the case?—She cannot: no woman can be a just judge of it.—He cried: My love of her is testified by my having Barmby handy to right her to-day, to-morrow, the very instant the clock strikes the hour of my release!

Mention of the clock swung that silly guilt figure. Victor entered into it, condemned to swing, and be a thrall. His intensity of sensation launched him on an eternity of the swinging in ridiculous nakedness to the measure of Time gone crazy. He had to correct a reproof of Mrs. Burman, as the cause of the nonsense. He ran down to breakfast, hoping he might hear of that clock stopped, and that sickening motion with it.

Another letter from the Sanfredini in Milan, warmly inviting to her villa over Como, acted on him at breakfast like the waving of a banner. "We go," Victor said to Nataly, and flattered-up a smile about her lips—too much a resurrection smile. There was talk of the Meeting at the theatre: Simeon Fenellan had spoken there in the cause of the deceased Member, was known, and was likely to have a good reception. Fun and enthusiasm might be expected.

"And my darling will hear her husband speak to-night," he whispered as he was departing; and did a mischief, he had to fear, for a shadowy knot crossed Nataly's forehead,

she seemed paler. He sent back Nesta and mademoiselle, in consequence, at the end of the Green Park.

Their dinner-hour was early; Simeon Fenellan, Colney Durance, and Mr. Peridon—pleasing to Nataly for his faithful siege of the French fortress—were the only guests. When they rose, Nataly drew Victor aside. He came dismayed to Nesta. She ran to her mother. “Not hear papa speak? Oh, mother, mother! Then I stay with her. But can’t she come? He is going to unfold *ideas* to us. There!”

“My naughty girl is not to poke her fun at orators,” Nataly said. “No, dearest; it would agitate me to go. I’m better here. I shall be at peace when the night is over.”

“But you will be all alone here, dear mother.”

Nataly’s eyes wandered to fall on Colney. He proposed to give her his company. She declined it. Nesta ventured another entreaty, either that she might be allowed to stay or have her mother with her at the Meeting.

“My love,” Nataly said, “the thought of the Meeting——” She clasped at her breast; and she murmured: “I shall be comforted by your being with him. There is no danger there. But I shall be happy, I shall be at peace when this night is over.”

Colney persuaded her to have him for companion. Mr. Peridon, who was to have driven with Nesta and mademoiselle, won admiration by proposing to stay for an hour and play some of Mrs. Radnor’s favourite pieces. Nesta and Victor overbore Nataly’s objections to the lover’s generosity. So Mr. Peridon was left. Nesta came hurrying back from the step of the carriage to kiss her mother again, saying: “Just one last kiss, my own! And she’s not to look troubled. I shall remember everything to tell my own mother. It will soon be over.”

Her mother nodded; but the embrace was passionate.

Nesta called her father into the passage, bidding him prohibit any delivery to her mother of news at the door. “She is easily startled now by trifles—you have noticed?”

Victor summoned his recollections and assured her he had noticed, as he believed he had. "The dear heart of her is fretting for the night to be over! And think!—seven days, and she is in Lakelands. A fortnight, and we have our first Concert. Durandarte! Oh, the dear heart'll be at peace when I tell her of a triumphant Meeting. Not a doubt of that, even though Colney turns the shadow of his back on us."

"One critic the less for you!" said Nesta. Skepsey was to meet her carriage at the theatre.

Ten minutes later, Victor and Simeon Fenellan were proceeding thitherward on foot.

"I have my speech," said Victor. "You prepare the way for me, following our influential friend Dubbleson; Colewort winds up; anyone else they shout for. We shall have a great evening. I suspect I shall find Themison or Jarniman when I get home. You don't believe in intimations? I've had crapy processions all day before my eyes. No wonder, after yesterday!"

"Dubbleson mustn't drawl it out too long," said Fenellan.

"We'll drop a hint. Where's Dartrey?"

"He'll come. He's in one of his black moods: not temper. He's got a notion he killed his wife by dragging her to Africa with him. She was not only ready to go, she was glad to go. She had a bit of the heroine in her and a certainty of tripping to the deuce if she was left to herself."

"Tell Nataly that," said Victor. "And tell her about Dartrey. Harp on it. Once she was all for him and our girl. But it's a woman—though the dearest! I defy anyone to hit on the cause of their changes. We must make the best of things, if we're for swimming. The task for me to-night will be, to keep from rolling out all I've got in my head. And I'm not revolutionary, I'm for stability. Only I do see, that the firm stepping-place asks for a long stride to be taken. One can't get the English to take a stride—unless it's for a foot behind them:—bother old Colney! Too timid, or too scrupulous, down we go into the mire.

There!—But I want to say it! I want to save the existing order. I want Christianity, instead of the Mammonism we're threatened with. Great fortunes now are becoming the giants of old to stalk the land: or mediæval Barons. Dispersion of wealth, is the secret. Nataly's of that mind with me. A decent poverty! She's rather wearying, wants a change. I've a steam-yacht in my eye, for next month on the Mediterranean. All our set. She likes quiet. I believe in my political recipe for it."

He thumped on a method he had for preserving aristocracy—*true* aristocracy, amid a positively democratic flood of riches.

"It appears to me, you're on the road of Priscilla Graves and Pempton," observed Simeon. "Strike off Priscilla's viands and friend Pempton's couple of glasses, and there's your aristocracy established; but with rather a dispersed recognition of itself."

"Upon my word, you talk like old Colney, except for a twang of your own," said Victor. "Colney sours at every fresh number of that Serial. The last, with Delphica detecting

the plot of Falarique, is really not so bad. The four disguised members of the Comédie Française on board the vessel from San Francisco, to declaim and prove the superior merits of the Gallic tongue, jumped me to bravo the cleverness. And Bobinikine turning to the complexion of the remainder of cupboard dumpling discovered in an emigrant's house-to-let! And Semhians—I forget what: and Mytharete's forefinger over the bridge of his nose, like a pensive vulture on the skull of a desert camel! But, I complain, there's nothing to make the English love the author; and it's wasted, he's 'basted, and the book'll have no sale. I hate satire."

"Rough soap for a thin skin, Victor. Does it hurt our people much?"

"Not a bit; doesn't touch them. But I want my friends to succeed!"

Their coming upon Westminster Bridge changed the theme. Victor wished the Houses of Parliament to catch the beams of sunset. He deferred to the suggestion, that the Hospital's doing so seemed appropriate.

"I'm always pleased to find a decent reason for what *is*," he said. Then he queried: "But *what* is, if we look at it, and while we look, Simeon? She may be going—or she's gone already, poor woman! I shall have that scene of yesterday everlastingly before my eyes, like a drop-curtain. Only, you know, Simeon, they don't feel the end, as we in health imagine. Colney would say, we have the spasms and they the peace. I've a mind to send up to Regent's Park with inquiries. It would look respectful. God forgive me!—the poor woman perverts me at every turn. Though I will say, a certain horror of death I had—she whisked me out of it yesterday. I don't feel it any longer. What are you jerking at?"

"Only to remark, that if the thing's done for us, we haven't it so much on our sensations."

"More, if we're sympathetic. But that compels us to be philosophic—or who could live! Poor woman!"

"Waft her gently, Victor!"

"Tush! Now for the South side of the

Bridges; and I tell you, Simeon, what I can't mention to-night: I mean to enliven these poor dear people on their forsaken South of the City. I've my scheme. Elected or not, I shall hardly be accused of bribery when I put down my first instalment."

Fenellan went to work with that remark in his brain for the speech he was to deliver. He could not but reflect on the genial man's willingness and capacity to do deeds of benevolence, constantly thwarted by the position into which he had plunged himself.

They were received at the verge of the crowd outside the theatre-doors by Skepsey, who wriggled, tore and clove a way for them, where all were obedient, but the numbers lumped and clogged. When finally they reached the stage, they spied at Nesta's box, during the thunder of the rounds of applause, after shaking hands with Mr. Dubbleson, Sir Abraham Quatley, Dudley Sowerby, and others; and with Beaves Urmsing—a politician "never of the opposite party to a deuce of a funny fellow!—go anywhere to hear him," he vowed.

“Miss Radnor and Mademoiselle de Seilles arrived quite safely,” said Dudley, feasting on the box which contained them and no Dartrey Fenellan in it.

Nesta was wondering at Dartrey’s absence. Not before Mr. Dubbleson, the chairman, the ‘gentleman of local influence,’ had animated the drowsed wits and respiratory organs of a packed audience by yielding place to Simeon, did Dartrey appear. Simeon’s name was shouted, in proof of the happy explosion of his first anecdote, as Dartrey took seat behind Nesta. “Half an hour with the dear mother,” he said.

Nesta’s eyes thanked him. She pressed the hand of a demure young woman sitting close behind Louise de Seilles. “You know Matilda Pridden.”

Dartrey held his hand out. “Has she forgiven me?”

Matilda bowed gravely, enfolding her affirmative in an outline of the no need for it, with perfect good breeding. Dartrey was moved to think Skepsey’s choice of a woman to worship did him honour. He

glanced at Louise. Her manner toward Matilda Pridden showed her sisterly with Nesta. He said: "I left Mr. Peridon playing.—A little anxiety to hear that the great speech of the evening is done; it's nothing else. I'll run to her as soon as it's over."

"Oh, good of you! And kind of Mr. Peridon!" She turned to Louise, who smiled at the simple art of the exclamation, assenting.

Victor below, on the stage platform, indicated the waving of a hand to them and his delight at Simeon's ringing points: which were, to Dartrey's mind, vacuously clever and crafty. Dartrey despised effects of oratory, save when soldiers had to be hurled on a mark—or citizens nerved to stand for their country. . Nesta dived into her father's brilliancy of appreciation, a trifle pained by Dartrey's aristocratic air when he surveyed the herd of heads agape and another cheer rang round. He smiled with her, to be with her, at a hit here and there; he would not pretend an approval of this manner of winning electors to consider the country's interests and their own. One fellow in the

crowded pit, affecting a familiarity with Simeon, that permitted the taking of liberties with the orator's Christian name, mildly amused him. He had no objection to hear "Simmy" shouted, as Louise de Seilles observed. She was of his mind, in regard to the rough machinery of Freedom.

Skepsey entered the box.

"We shall soon be serious, Miss Nesta," he said, after a look at Matilda Pridden.

There was prolonged roaring—on the cheerful side.

"And another word about security that your candidate will keep his promises," continued Simeon: "You have his word, my friends!" And he told the story of the old Governor of Goa, who wanted money and summoned the usurers, and they wanted security; whereupon he laid his Hidalgo hand on a cataract of Kronos-beard across his breast, and pulled forth three white hairs, and presented them: "And as honourably to the usurious Jews as to the noble gentleman himself, that security was accepted!"

Emerging from hearty clamours, the illus-

trative orator fell upon the question of political specifics :—Mr. Victor Radnor trusted to English good sense too profoundly to be offering them positive cures, as they would hear the enemy say he did. Yet a bit of a cure may be offered, if we're not for pushing it too far, in pursuit of the science of specifics, in the style of the foreign physician, probably Spanish, who had no practice, and wished for leisure to let him prosecute his anatomical and other investigations to discover his grand medical nostrum. So to get him fees meanwhile he advertised a cure for dyspepsia—the resource of starving doctors. And sure enough his patient came, showing the grand fat fellow we may be when we carry more of the deciduously mortal than of the scraggy vital upon our persons. Anyone at a glance would have prescribed water-cresses to him : water-cresses exclusively to eat for a fortnight. And that the good physician did. Away went his patient, returning at the end of the fortnight, lean, and with the appetite of a Toledo blade for succulent slices. He vowed he was the man. Our estimable doctor eyed him,

tapped at him, pinched his tender parts ; and making him swear he was really the man, and had eaten nothing whatever but unadulterated water-cresses in the interval, seized on him in an ecstasy by the collar of his coat, pushed him into the surgery, knocked him over, killed him, cut him up, and enjoyed the felicity of exposing to view the very healthiest patient ever seen under dissecting hand, by favour of the fortunate discovery of the specific for him. All to further science!—to which, in spite of the petitions of all the scientific bodies of the civilized world, he fell a martyr on the scaffold, poor gentleman ! But we know politics to be no such empirical science.

Simeon ingeniously interwove his analogy. He brought it home to Beaves Urmsing, whose laugh drove any tone of apology out of it. Yet the orator was asked : “ Do you take politics for a joke, Simmy ? ”

He countered his questioner : “ Just to liberate you from your moribund state, my friend.” And he told the story of the wrecked sailor, found lying on the sands,

flung up from the foundered ship of a Salvation captain; and how, that nothing could waken him, and there he lay fit for interment; until presently a something of a voice grew down into his ears; and it was his old chum Polly, whom he had tied to a board to give her a last chance in the surges; and Polly shaking the wet from her feathers, and shouting: "*Polly tho dram dry!*"—which struck on the nob of Jack's memory, to revive all the liquorly tricks of the cabin under Salvationism, and he began heaving, and at last he shook in a lazy way, and then from sputter to sputter got his laugh loose; and he sat up, and cried: "That did it! Now to business!" for he was hungry. "And when I catch the ring of this world's laugh from you, my friend! . . ." Simeon's application of the story was drowned.

After the outburst, they heard his friend again interruptingly: "You keep that tongue of yours from wagging, as it did when you got round the old widow woman for her money, Simmy!"

Victor leaned forward. Simeon towered.

He bellowed : “ And you keep that tongue of yours from committing incest on a lie ! ”

It was like a lightning-flash in the theatre. The man went under. Simeon flowed. Conscience reproached him with the little he had done for Victor, and he had now his congenial opportunity.

Up in the box, the powers of the orator were not so cordially esteemed. To Matilda Pridden, his tales were barely decently the flesh and the devil smothering a holy occasion to penetrate and exhort. Dartrey sat rigid, as with the checked impatience for a leap. Nesta looked at Louise when some one was perceived on the stage bending to her father. It was Mr. Peridon ; he never once raised his face. Apparently he was not intelligible or audible : but the next moment Victor sprang erect. Dartrey quitted the box. Nesta beheld her father uttering hurried words to right and left. He passed from sight, Mr. Peridon with him ; and Dartrey did not return.

Nesta felt her father's absence as light gone : his eyes rayed light. Besides she had the anticipation of a speech from him,

that would win Matilda Pridden. She fancied Simeon Fenellan to be rather under the spell of the hilarity he roused. A gentleman behind him spoke in his ear; and Simeon, instead of ceasing, resumed his flow. Matilda Pridden's gaze on him and the people was painful to behold: Nesta saw her mind. She set herself to study a popular assembly. It could be serious to the call of better leadership, she believed. Her father had been telling her of late of a faith he had in the English, that they (or so her intelligence translated his remarks) had power to rise to spiritual ascendancy, and be once more the Islanders heading the world of a new epoch abjuring materialism:—some such idea; very quickening to her, as it would be to this earnest young woman worshipped by Skepsey. Her father's absence and the continued shouts of laughter, the insatiable thirst for fun, darkened her in her desire to have the soul of the good working sister refreshed. They had talked together; not much: enough for each to see at either's breast the wells from the founts of life.

The box-door opened, Dartrey came in. He took her hand. She stood-up to his look. He said to Matilda Pridden: "Come with us; she will need you."

"Speak it," said Nesta.

He said to the other: "She has courage."

"I could trust to her," Matilda Pridden replied.

Nesta read his eyes. "Mother?"

His answer was in the pressure.

"Ill?"

"No longer."

"Oh! Dartrey."

Matilda Pridden caught her fast.

"I can walk, dear," Nesta said.

Dartrey mentioned her father.

She understood: "I am thinking of him."

The words of her mother: 'At peace when the night is over,' rang. Along the gassy passages of the back of the theatre, the sound coming from an applausive audience was as much a thunder as rage would have been. It was as void of human meaning as a sea.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST.

IN the still dark hour of that April morning, the Rev. Septimus Barmby was roused by Mr. Peridon, with a scribbled message from Victor, which he deciphered by candlelight held close to the sheet of paper, between short inquiries and communications, losing more and more the sense of it as his intelligence became aware of what dread blow had befallen the stricken man. He was bidden come to fulfil his promise instantly. He remembered the bearing of the promise. Mr. Peridon's hurried explanatory narrative made the request terrific, out of tragically lamentable. A semblance of obedience had to be put on, and the act of dressing aided it.

Mr. Barmby prayed at heart for guidance further.

The two gentlemen drove Westward, speaking little; they had the dry sob in the throat.

“Miss Radnor?” Mr. Barmby asked.

“She is shattered; she holds up; she would not break down.”

“I can conceive her to possess high courage.”

“She has her friend Mademoiselle de Seilles.”

Mr. Barmby remained humbly silent. Affectionate deep regrets moved him to say: “A loss irreparable. We have but one voice of sorrow. And how sudden! The dear lady had no suffering, I trust.”

“She fell into the arms of Mr. Durance. She died in his arms. She was unconscious, he says. I left her straining for breath. She said ‘Victor;’ she tried to smile:—I understood I was not to alarm him.”

“And he too late!”

“He was too late, by some minutes.”

“At least I may comfort. Miss Radnor must be a blessing to him.”

“They cannot meet. Her presence excites him.”

That radiant home of all hospitality seemed opening on from darker chambers to the deadly dark. The immorality in the moral situation could not be forgotten by one who was professionally a moralist. But an incorruptible beauty in the woman's character claimed to plead for her memory. Even the rigorous in defence of righteous laws are softened by a sinner's death to hear excuses, and may own a relationship, haply perceive the faint nimbus of the saint. Death among us proves us to be still not so far from the Nature saying at every avenue to the mind : *Earth makes all sweet.*

Mr. Durance had prophesied a wailful end ever to the carol of Optimists ! Yet it is not the black view which is the right view. There is one between : the path adopted by Septimus Barmby :—if he could but induce his brethren to enter on it ! The dreadful teaching of circumstances might help to the persuading of a fair young woman, under his direction . . . having her hand disengaged.

—Mr. Barmby startled himself in the dream of his uninterred passion for the maiden : he chased it, seized it, hurled it hence, as a present sacrilege :—constantly, and at the pitch of our highest devotion to serve, are we assailed by the tempter ! Is it, that the love of woman is our weakness ? For if so, then would a celibate clergy have grant of immunity. But, alas, it is not so with them ! We have to deplore the hearing of reports too credible. Again we are pushed to contemplate woman as the mysterious obstruction to the perfect purity of soul. Nor is there a refuge in asceticism. No more devilish nourisher of pride do we find than in pain voluntarily embraced. And strangely, at the time when our hearts are pledged to thoughts upon others, they are led by woman to glance revolving upon ourself, our vile self ! Mr. Barmby clutched it by the neck.

Light now, as of a strong memory of day along the street, assisted him to forget himself at the sight of the inanimate houses of this London, all revealed in a quietness not less immobile than tombstones of an unend-

ing cemetery, with its last ghost laid. Did men but know it!—The habitual necessity to amass matter for the weekly sermon, set him noting his meditative exclamations, the noble army of platitudes under haloes, of good use to men: justifiably turned over in his mind for their good. He had to think, that this act of the justifying of the act reproached him with a lack of due emotion, in sympathy with agonized friends truly dear. Drawing near the hospitable house, his official and a cordial emotion united, as we see sorrowful crape-wreathed countenances. His heart struck heavily when the house was visible.

Could it be the very house? The look of it belied the tale inside. But that threw a ghostliness on the look.

Some one was pacing up and down. They greeted Dudley Sowerby. His ability to speak was tasked. They gathered, that mademoiselle and “a Miss Pridden” were sitting with Nesta, and that their service in a crisis had been precious. At such times, one of them reflected, woman has indeed her

place: when life's battle waxes red. Her soul must be capable of mounting to the level of the man's, then! It is a lesson!

Dudley said he was waiting for Dr. Themison to come forth. He could not tear himself from sight of the house.

The door opened to Dr. Themison departing, Colney Durance and Simeon Fenellan bare-headed. Colney showed a face with stains of the lashing of tears.

Dr. Themison gave his final counsels. "Her father must not see her. For him, it *may* have to be a specialist. We will hope the best. Mr. Dartrey Fenellan stays beside him:—good. As to the ceremony he calls for, a form of it might soothe:—any soothing possible! No music. I will return in a few hours."

He went on foot.

Mr. Barmby begged advice from Colney and Simeon concerning the message he had received—the ceremony requiring his official presidency. Neither of them replied. They breathed the morning air, they gave out long-drawn sighs of relief, looking on the trees of the park.

A man came along the pavement, working slow legs hurriedly. Simeon ran down to him.

"Humour, as much as you can," Colney said to Mr. Barmby. "Let him imagine."

"Miss Radnor?"

"Not to speak of her!"

"The daughter he so loves?"

Mr. Barmby's tender inquisitiveness was unanswered. Were they inducing him to mollify a madman? But was it possible to associate the idea of madness with Mr. Radnor?

Simeon ran back. "Jarniman," he remarked. "It's over!"

"Now!" Colney's shoulders expressed the comment. "Well, now, Mr. Barmby, you can do the part desired. Come in. It's morning!" He stared at the sky.

All except Dudley passed in.

Mr. Barmby wanted more advice, his dilemma being acute. It was moderated, though not more than moderated, when he was informed of the death of Mrs. Burman Radnor; an event that occurred, according

to Jarniman's report, forty-five minutes after Skepsey had a second time called for information of it at the house in Regent's Park: five hours and a half, as Colney made his calculation, after the death of Nataly. He was urged by some spur of senseless irony to verify the calculation and correct it in the minutes.

Dudley crossed the road. No sign of the awful interior was on any of the windows of the house either to deepen awe or relieve. They were blank as eyeballs of the mindless. He shivered. Death is our common cloak; but Calamity individualizes, to set the unwounded speculating whether indeed a stricken man, who has become the cause of woeful trouble, may not be pointing a moral. Pacing on the Park side of the house, he saw Skepsey drive up and leap out with a gentleman, Mr. Radnor's lawyer. Could it be, that there was no Will written? Could a Will be executed now? The moral was more forcibly suggested. Dudley beheld this Mr. Victor Radnor successful up all the main steps, persuasive, popular, brightest of

the elect of Fortune, felled to the ground within an hour; he and all his house! And if at once to pass beneath the ground, the blow would have seemed merciful for him. Or if, instead of chattering a mixture of the rational and the monstrous, he had been heard to rave like the utterly distraught. Recollection of some of the things he shouted, was an anguish:—A notion came into the poor man, that he was the dead one of the two, and he cried out: “Cremation? No, Colney’s right, it robs us of our last laugh. I lie as I fall.” He “had a confession for his Nataly, for her only, for no one else.” He had “an Idea.” His begging of Dudley to listen without any punctilio (putting a vulgar oath before it), was the sole piece of unreasonableness in the explanation of the idea: and that was not much wilder than the stuff Dudley had read from reports of Radical speeches. He told Dudley he thought him too young to be “best man to a widower about to be married,” and that Barmby was “coming all haste to do the business, because of no time to spare.”

Dudley knew but the half, and he did not envy Dartrey Fenellan his task of watching over the wreck of a splendid intelligence, humouring and restraining. According to the rumours, Mr. Radnor had not shown the symptoms before the appearance of his daughter. For awhile he hung, and then fell, like an icicle. Nesta came with a cry for her father. He rose; Dartrey was by. Hugged fast in iron muscles, the unhappy creature raved of his being a caged lion. These things Dudley had heard in the house.

There are scenes of life proper to the grave-cloth.

Nataly's dead body was her advocate with her family, with friends, with the world. Victor had more need of a covering shroud to keep calamity respected. Earth makes all sweet: and we, when the privilege is granted us, do well to treat the terribly stricken as if they had entered to the bosom of earth.

That night's infinite sadness was concentrated upon Nesta. She had need of her strength of mind and body.

The night went past as a year. The year followed it as a refreshing night. Slowly lifting her from our abysses, it was a good angel to the girl. Permission could not be given for her to see her father. She had a home in the modest home of Louise de Seilles on the borders of Dauphiné; and with French hearts at their best in winningness around her, she learned again, as an art, the natural act of breathing calmly; she had by degrees a longing for the snow-heights. When her imagination could perch on them with love and pride, she began to recover the throb for a part in human action. It set her nature flowing to the mate she had chosen, who was her counsellor, her supporter, and her sword. She had awakened to new life, not to sink back upon a breast of love, though thoughts of the lover were as blows upon strung musical chords at her bosom. Her union with Dartrey was for the having an ally and the being an ally, in resolute vision of strife ahead, through the veiled dreams that bear the blush. This was behind a maidenly demureness. Are not

young women hypocrites? Who shall fathom their guile! A girl with a pretty smile, a gentle manner, a liking for wild flowers up on the rocks; and graceful with resemblances to the swelling proportions of garden-fruits approved in young women by the connoisseur eye of man; distinctly designed to embrace the state of marriage, that she might (a girl of singularly lucid and receptive eyes) the better give battle to men touching matters which they howl at an eccentric matron for naming. So it was. And the yielding of her hand to Dartrey, would have appeared at that period of her revival, as among the baser compliances of the fleshly, if she had not seen in him, whom she owned for leader, her fellow soldier, warrior friend, hero, of her own heart's mould, but a greater.

She was on Como, at the villa of the Signora Giulia Sanfredini, when Dudley's letter reached her, with the supplicating offer of the share of his earldom. An English home meanwhile was proposed to her at the house of his mother the Countess. He knew that he did not write to a brilliant heiress.

The generosity she had always felt that he possessed, he thus proved in figures. They are convincing and not melting. But she was moved to tears by his goodness in visiting her father, as well as by the hopeful news he sent. He wrote delicately, withholding the title of her father's place of abode. There were expectations of her father's perfect recovery; the signs were auspicious; he appeared to be restored to the 'likeness to himself' in the instances Dudley furnished:—his appointment with him for the flute-duet next day; and particularly his enthusiastic satisfaction with the largeness and easy excellent service of the residence "in which he so happily found himself established." He held it to be, "on the whole, superior to Lakelands." The smile and the tear rolled together in Nesta reading these words. And her father spoke repeatedly of longing to embrace his Fredi, of the joy her last letter had given him, of his intention to send an immediate answer: and he showed Dudley a pile of manuscript ready for the post. He talked of public affairs, was humorous over

any extravagance or eccentricity in the views he took; notably when he alluded to his envy of little Skepsey. He said he really did envy; and his daughter believed it and saw fair prospects in it.

Her grateful reply to the young earl conveyed all that was perforce ungentle, in the signature of the name of Nesta Victoria Fenellan:—a name he was to hear cited among the cushioned conservatives, and plead for as he best could under a pressure of disapprobation, and compelled esteem, and regrets.

The day following the report of her father's wish to see her, she and her husband started for England. On that day, Victor breathed his last. Dudley had seen the not hopeful but an ominous illumination of the stricken man; for whom came the peace his Nataly had in earth. Often did Nesta conjure up to vision the palpitating form of the beloved mother with her hand at her mortal wound in secret through long years of the wearing of the mask to keep her mate inspirited. Her gathered knowledge of things and her

ruthless penetrativeness made it sometimes hard for her to be tolerant of a world, whose tolerance of the infinitely evil stamped blotches on its face and shrieked in stains across the skin beneath its gallant garb. That was only when she thought of it as the world condemning her mother. She had a husband able and ready, in return for corrections of his demon temper, to trim an ardent young woman's fanatical overflow of the sisterly sentiments; scholarly friends, too, for such restrainings from excess as the mind obtains in a lamp of History exhibiting man's original sprouts to growth and fitful continuation of them. Her first experience of the grief that is in pleasure, for those who have passed a season, was when the old Concert-set assembled round her. When she heard from the mouth of a living woman, that she had saved her from going under the world's waggon-wheels, and taught her to know what is actually meant by the good living of a shapely life, Nesta had the taste of a harvest happiness richer than her recollection of the bride's, though never was bride in

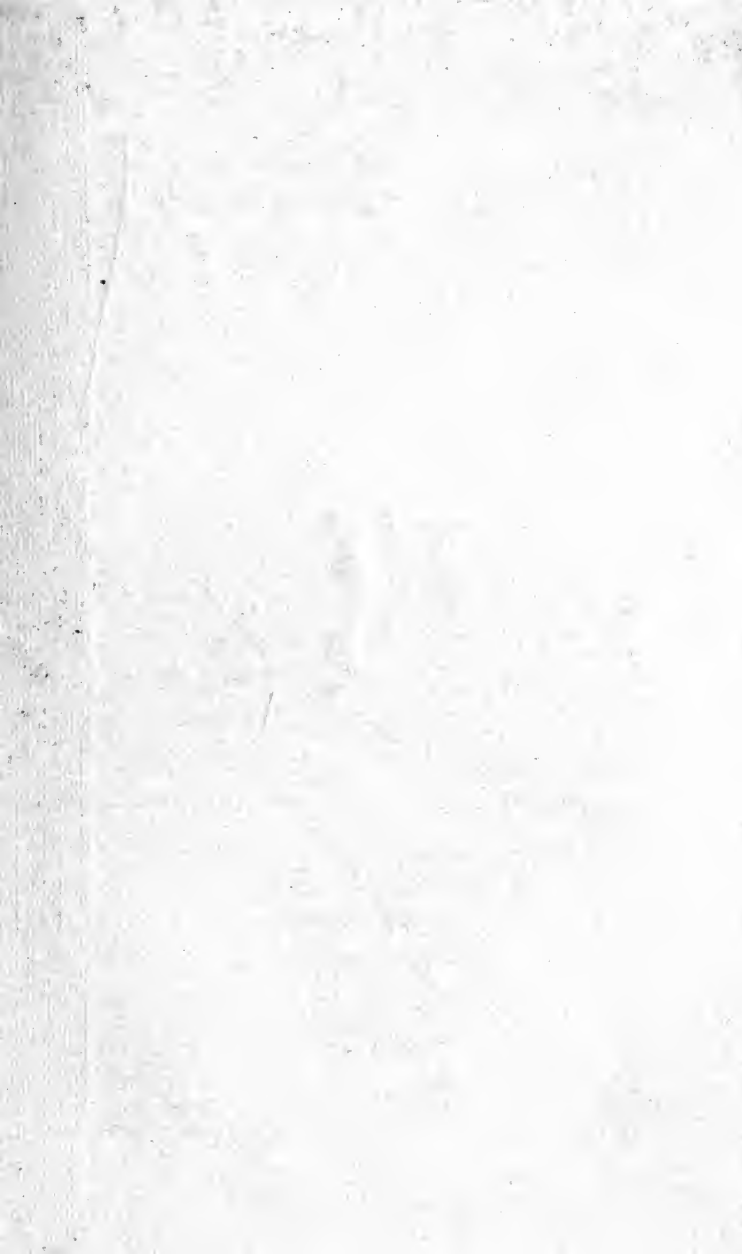
fuller flower to her lord than she who brought the dower of an equal valiancy to Dartrey Fenellan. You are aware of the reasons, the many, why a courageous young woman requires of high heaven, far more than the commendably timid, a doughty husband. She had him ; otherwise would that puzzled old world, which beheld her step out of the ranks to challenge it, and could not blast her personal reputation, have commissioned a paw to maul her character, perhaps instructing the gossips to murmur of her parentage. Nesta Victoria Fenellan had the husband who would have the world respectful to any brave woman. This one was his wife.

Daniel Skepsey rejoices in service to his new master, owing to the scientific opinion he can at any moment of the day apply for, as to the military defences of the country ; instead of our attempting to arrest the enemy by vociferations of persistent prayer :—the sole point of difference between him and his Matilda ; and it might have been fatal but that Nesta's intervention was persuasive. The two members of the Army first in the field to enrol

and give rank according to the merits of either, to both sexes, were made one. Colney Durance (practically cynical when not fancifully, men said) stood by Skepsey at the altar. His published exercises in Satire produce a flush of the article in the Reviews of his books. Meat and wine in turn fence the Hymen beckoning Priscilla and Mr. Pempton. The forms of Religion more than the Channel's division of races keep Louise de Seilles and Mr. Peridon asunder: and in the uniting of them Colney is interested, because it would have so pleased the woman of the loyal heart no longer beating. He let Victor's end be his expiation and did not phrase blame of him. He considered the shallowness of the abstract Optimist exposed enough in Victor's history. He was reconciled to it when, looking on their child, he discerned, that for a cancelling of the errors chargeable to them, the father and mother had kept faith with Nature.

THE END.





87

